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EDEXCEL INTERNATIONAL GCSE (9–1)

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Student Book

Greg Bevan, Samantha Brunner, James Christie, David Farnell, Fleur Frederick,
Shaun Gamble, Peter Inson, Robert O'Brien, Pam Taylor

eBook
included

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

This book has been written to help all students taking the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (9–1) in English Literature (**4ET1** – first examination June 2018). It is designed to enable them to achieve their full potential during the course and in the examination. It is written for both students and teachers. There are two routes for this International GCSE: Route 1 is assessed entirely through two examinations and Route 2 includes coursework instead of the second exam. This book will prepare students for all aspects of the course.

STUDENTS

How will this book support you? We hope you will find it:

- useful for developing your skills and techniques fully for the International GCSE in English Literature
- a helpful guide to your study of the selected texts
- a useful support in planning and writing the coursework and planning revision
- a helpful aid to your reading of the selected Section C poems from the Pearson Edexcel Anthology for International GCSE and qualifications in English Literature (Routes 1 and 2)
- a support in preparing for unseen texts (Route 1)
- a support in working on the coursework assignments (Route 2).

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

The book goes through the requirements for English Literature, with explanations, suggestions and questions. It also includes a large number of practical activities and examples. These are for practice and will also help you to appreciate how really good answers are written and structured.

HINT

Remember to plan your work. The sooner you organise yourself and your ideas, the easier you will find your preparation for every section of the examination. This book aims to give you confidence by improving your skills and techniques to the point where you know you can succeed.

KNOW YOUR TEXTS

It is very important to make sure that you have a really good grasp of the selected Drama and Prose texts (both routes) and Anthology poems (both routes). Every year, examiners read candidate answers that show that they do not understand, or have not prepared carefully, the texts that are set. Use the relevant sections from this book to strengthen your knowledge of the texts.

APPLY YOUR SKILLS

One question in Paper 1 (both routes) presents you with a poem you will not have seen before. This tests your ability to apply the reading skills you have learned during the course in the exam room. Only practice will bring success here.

KNOW AND APPLY PROPERLY YOUR TECHNICAL TERMS

As with other subjects, English Literature has a number of technical terms that you will need to use. It is important that you can use the correct term and that you can spell it. Refer to the subject vocabulary within the margins or the Glossary on pages 332–334 to help you. It is even more important that you know how to explain why a particular device is used, looking at the writer's intentions. In the exams, you will always be given credit for explaining the effects of a word or phrase, whether or not you use the technical terms, but accurate use of the right terms will make your writing more fluent and concise.

Note that terms printed in bold type in the text will have a definition in the margin or in the Glossary so that you can check their meaning.

HINT

Make a list of technical terms and write out what you think they mean, then check your definitions against the Glossary at the back of this book or the lists of subject vocabulary in the margins.

EXPLORE HOW TO IMPROVE THE STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF YOUR ANSWERS

Look closely at the model answers that are given at various points throughout this book. This will help you to write detailed, successful responses.

PRESENTING YOUR WORK EFFECTIVELY

The way in which you set out your own writing is important for various reasons. Get into the habit of producing writing that is:

- neat, regular and clear
- spelled accurately
- correctly punctuated
- set out in clear paragraphs.

Such strengths in your writing will bring many advantages, both in the examination and afterwards.

- Examiners will form a positive impression of your work.
- They will be able to read your answer easily; they will not be able to do so if your handwriting is poor or if it is not written in proper sentences.
- How you write, as well as what you write, will be considered when your work is marked.
- Good writing is useful for applications for jobs or college courses.
- Many jobs need people who can write clearly, accurately and precisely.

HINT

Write out lists of technical terms in the Glossary and then try to find an example for each term.

KNOWING YOUR OWN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

It is an excellent idea to keep a checklist of your most common errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, since these are assessed in many subjects. When you receive a piece of work back from your teacher, read it through and make sure you understand any comments or corrections.

- Keep a piece of paper at the front or back of your work file and write the correct spelling of words you have misspelled on it.
- Refer to this before handing in your work, to make sure you have not made the same mistakes.
- Take some time to learn the spellings and other points on your list.

▼ REMEMBER!

- Make the best use of lesson time.
- Make sure you know what you have to do in class.
- Be sure you understand what the homework is.
- Check what your coursework assignments are. (Route 2)

▼ MAKE NOTES!

- Write down key points from: teachers; books you read; class work; articles or worksheets.
- Annotate your copy of the Anthology carefully.
- Add points missed onto the end of your homework or practice questions when they are returned to you.

▼ SEEK HELP!

- Ask teachers to explain if you are unsure.
- Discuss with friends.
- Look things up using dictionaries, encyclopaedias and the internet.

▼ TAKE PART!

- Ask questions in class.
- Answer questions in class.
- Contribute to discussions.
- Be fully involved in group work.

▼ KEEP UP!

- Hand work in on time.
- Keep files or exercise books up-to-date.
- Make sure you keep up with your homework.
- Do not leave work unfinished. It is always difficult to remember what has been missed unless you change it at the time.
- Check off completed work in your records.

▼ BE ORGANISED!

- Have clear systems.
- Present work neatly.
- Set yourself targets.
- Stick to deadlines.

HINT

Use a system such as different coloured cards or sticky notes to note down the key points on each text.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

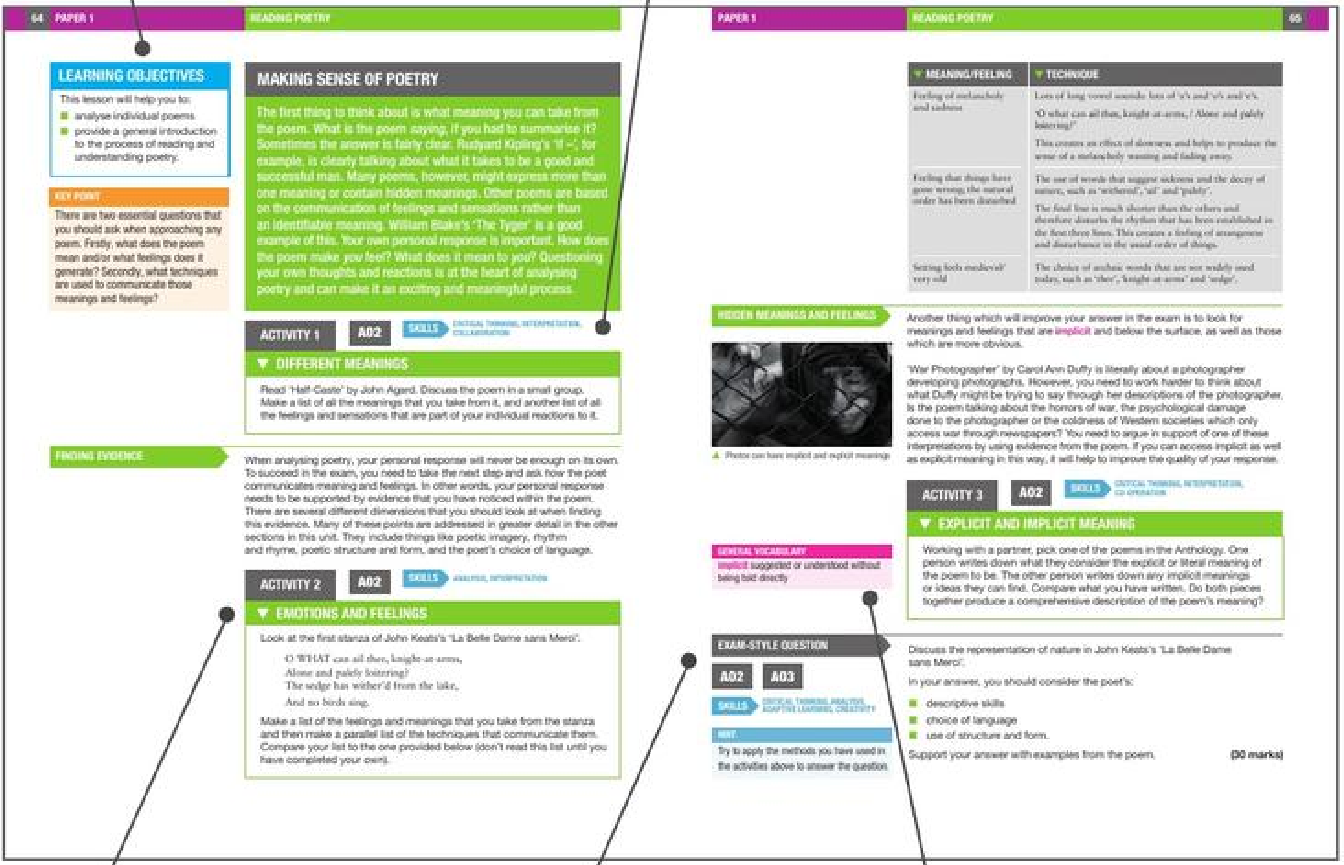
This book is written for students following the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (9–1) English Literature specification. This Student Book covers both years of the course.

The course has been structured so that teaching and learning can take place in any order, both in the classroom and for independent learning. The book contains five chapters: Reading Skills, Writing Skills, Paper 1, Paper 2 and Paper 3. The Reading Skills and Writing Skills chapters cover fundamental areas of these two key areas of English Literature. They build on and reinforce what students already know and develop essential skills that will allow them to succeed at this course. They can be taught as blocks at the start of the course or integrated into relevant sections of the texts being studied.

Learning objectives
Chapters and Units are carefully tailored to address key assessment objectives central to the course.

Skills
Each activity and set of questions has been assigned with the key skills gained from undertaking them, allowing for a strong focus on particular academic qualities.

Stretch your thinking
Exercises to push able students beyond content covered in the course and stimulate further thought and discussion.



64 PAPER 1 READING POETRY

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- analyse individual poems
- provide a general introduction to the process of reading and understanding poetry.

KEY POINT

There are two essential questions that you should ask when approaching any poem. Firstly, what does the poem mean and/or what feelings does it generate? Secondly, what techniques are used to communicate those meanings and feelings?

MAKING SENSE OF POETRY

The first thing to think about is what meaning you can take from the poem. What is the poem saying, if you had to summarise it? Sometimes the answer is fairly clear. Rudyard Kipling's 'If –', for example, is clearly talking about what it takes to be a good and successful man. Many poems, however, might express more than one meaning or contain hidden meanings. Other poems are based on the communication of feelings and sensations rather than an identifiable meaning. William Blake's 'The Tyger' is a good example of this. Your own personal response is important. How does the poem make you feel? What does it mean to you? Questioning your own thoughts and reactions is at the heart of analysing poetry and can make it an exciting and meaningful process.

ACTIVITY 1 A02 SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION, COLLABORATION

▼ DIFFERENT MEANINGS

Read 'Half-Caste' by John Agard. Discuss the poem in a small group. Make a list of all the meanings that you take from it, and another list of all the feelings and sensations that are part of your individual reactions to it.

FINDING EVIDENCE

When analysing poetry, your personal response will never be enough on its own. To succeed in the exam, you need to take the next step and ask how the poet communicates meaning and feelings. In other words, your personal response needs to be supported by evidence that you have noticed within the poem. There are several different dimensions that you should look at when finding this evidence. Many of these points are addressed in greater detail in the other sections in this unit. They include things like poetic imagery, rhythm and rhyme, poetic structure and form, and the poet's choice of language.

ACTIVITY 2 A02 SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS

Look at the first stanza of John Keats's 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'.

O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Make a list of the feelings and meanings that you take from the stanza and then make a parallel list of the techniques that communicate them. Compare your list to the one provided below (don't read this list until you have completed your own).

PAPER 1 READING POETRY 65

▼ MEANING/FEELING	▼ TECHNIQUE
Feeling of melancholy and sadness	Lots of long vowel sounds: lots of 'a's and 'o's and 'e's. 'O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms, / Alone and palely loitering?' This creates an effect of slowness and helps to produce the sense of a melancholy wasting and fading away.
Feeling that things have gone wrong; the natural order has been disturbed	The use of words that suggest sickness and the decay of nature, such as 'withered', 'ail' and 'palely'. The final line is much shorter than the others and therefore disturbs the rhythm that has been established in the first three lines. This creates a feeling of strangeness and disturbance in the usual order of things.
Setting feels medieval/very old	The choice of archaic words that are not widely used today, such as 'thee', 'knight-at-arms' and 'sedge'.

HIDDEN MEANINGS AND FEELINGS

Another thing which will improve your answer in the exam is to look for meanings and feelings that are implicit and below the surface, as well as those which are more obvious.

'War Photographer' by Carol Ann Duffy is literally about a photographer developing photographs. However, you need to work harder to think about what Duffy might be trying to say through her descriptions of the photographer. Is the poem talking about the horrors of war, the psychological damage done to the photographer or the coldness of Western societies which only access war through newspapers? You need to argue in support of one of these interpretations by using evidence from the poem. If you can access implicit as well as explicit meaning in this way, it will help to improve the quality of your response.

▲ Photos can have implicit and explicit meanings

GENERAL VOCABULARY

implicit suggested or understood without being told directly

ACTIVITY 3 A02 SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION, CO-OPERATION

▼ EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT MEANING

Working with a partner, pick one of the poems in the Anthology. One person writes down what they consider the explicit or literal meaning of the poem to be. The other person writes down any implicit meanings or ideas they can find. Compare what you have written. Do both pieces together produce a comprehensive description of the poem's meaning?

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A02 A03

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, ADAPTIVE LEARNING, CREATIVITY

HINT

Try to apply the methods you have used in the activities above to answer the question.

Discuss the representation of nature in John Keats's 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'.

In your answer, you should consider the poet's:

- descriptive skills
- choice of language
- use of structure and form.

Support your answer with examples from the poem. **(30 marks)**

Activities
A wide range of varied activities to encourage understanding and embed understanding as an individual, as well as in larger groups to establish cross-peer learning and communication.

Exam-style questions
Questions tailored to the Pearson Edexcel specification to allow for practice and development of exam writing technique.

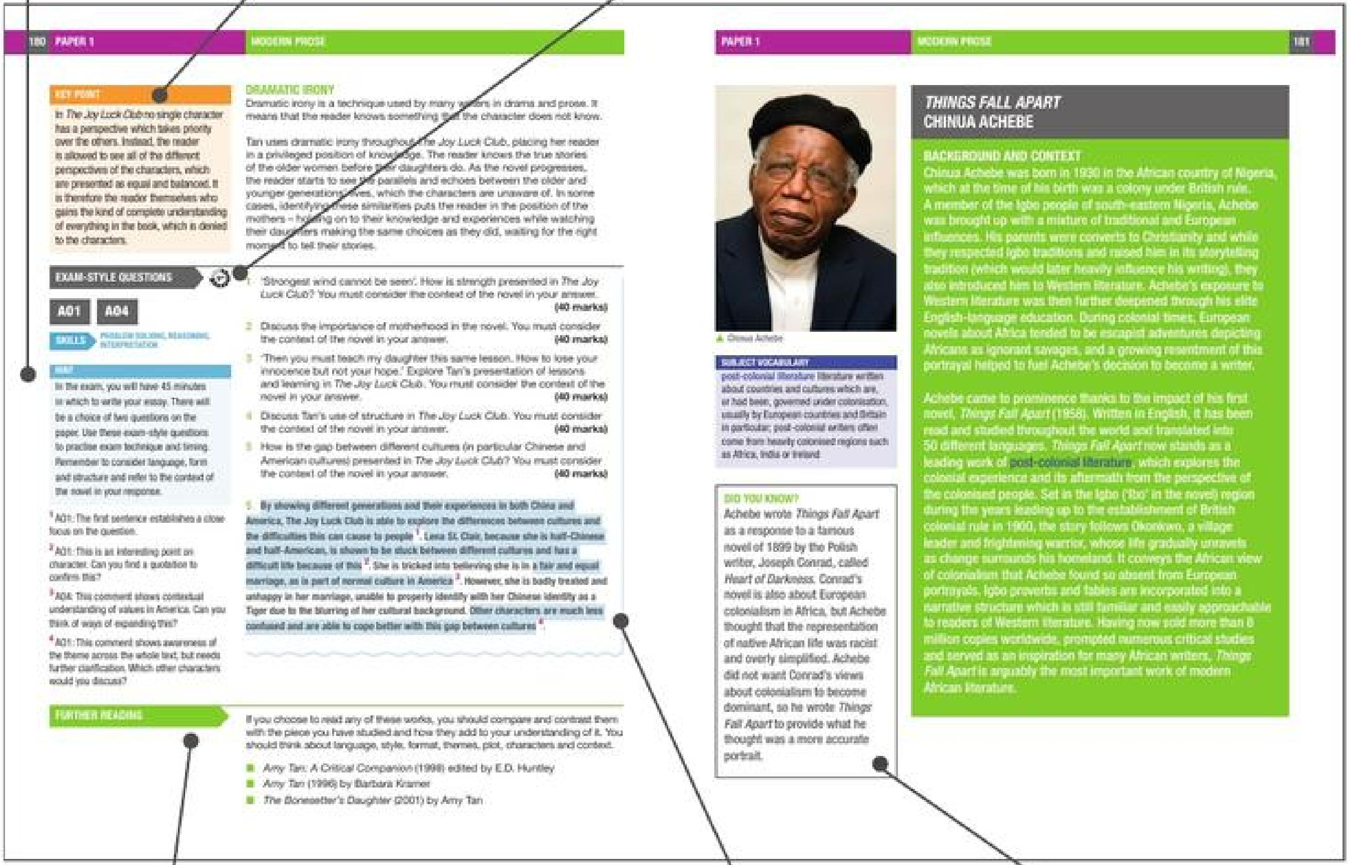
Subject vocabulary and General vocabulary
Useful words and phrases are colour coded within the main text and picked out in the margin with concise and simple definitions. These will support understanding of key subject terms and support students whose first language is not English.

The Paper 1 and Paper 2 chapters cover all of the content required by the course, mirroring the two exam papers for those taking this route. The information in the Paper 2 chapter will also work for anybody taking the coursework route. This is then supplemented by the Paper 3 chapter, which gives advice on this paper for those taking this route.
For each section or text, information is supported with activities in order to put learning into practice and exam-style questions to help you prepare and practise for the exam. Other features help to expand your knowledge and reinforce your learning. All Anthology texts are reproduced in full, with detailed analysis and questions for each text.

Hint
Useful support and advice addressing common mistakes or difficult content.

Key points
Easy to understand, core points to be taken away from sections or texts.

Pearson Progression
Sample student answers have been given a **Pearson Step** from 1 to 12. This tells you how well the response has met the criteria in the **Pearson Progression Map**.



180 PAPER 1 MODERN PROSE

KEY POINT
In *The Joy Luck Club* no single character has a perspective which takes priority over the others. Instead, the reader is allowed to see all of the different perspectives of the characters, which are presented as equal and balanced. It is therefore the reader themselves who gains the kind of complete understanding of everything in the book, which is denied to the characters.

DRAMATIC IRONY
Dramatic irony is a technique used by many writers in drama and prose. It means that the reader knows something that the character does not know.

Tan uses dramatic irony throughout *The Joy Luck Club*, placing her reader in a privileged position of knowledge. The reader knows the true stories of the older women before their daughters do. As the novel progresses, the reader starts to see the parallels and echoes between the older and younger generations' lives, which the characters are unaware of. In some cases, identifying these similarities puts the reader in the position of the mothers – holding on to their knowledge and experiences while watching their daughters making the same choices as they did, waiting for the right moment to tell their stories.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A01 A04

SKILLS PROBLEM SOLVING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

1 'Strongest wind cannot be seen'. How is strength presented in *The Joy Luck Club*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**
2 Discuss the importance of motherhood in the novel. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**
3 'Then you must teach my daughter this same lesson. How to lose your innocence but not your hope.' Explore Tan's presentation of lessons and learning in *The Joy Luck Club*. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**
4 Discuss Tan's use of structure in *The Joy Luck Club*. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**
5 How is the gap between different cultures (in particular Chinese and American cultures) presented in *The Joy Luck Club*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

HINT
In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your response.

5. **By showing different generations and their experiences in both China and America, The Joy Luck Club is able to explore the differences between cultures and the difficulties this can cause to people**[1]. **Lena St. Clair, because she is half-Chinese and half-American, is shown to be stuck between different cultures and has a difficult life because of this**[2]. She is tricked into believing she is in **a fair and equal marriage, as is part of normal culture in America**[3]. However, she is badly treated and unhappy in her marriage, unable to properly identify with her Chinese identity as a Tiger due to the blurring of her cultural background. **Other characters are much less confused and are able to cope better with this gap between cultures**[4].

[1] A01: The first sentence establishes a close focus on the question.

[2] A01: This is an interesting point on character. Can you find a quotation to confirm this?

[3] A04: This comment shows contextual understanding of values in America. Can you think of ways of expanding this?

[4] A01: This comment shows awareness of the theme across the whole text, but needs further clarification. Which other characters would you discuss?

FURTHER READING
If you choose to read any of these works, you should compare and contrast them with the piece you have studied and how they add to your understanding of it. You should think about language, style, format, themes, plot, characters and context.
- *Amy Tan: A Critical Companion* (1998) edited by E.D. Huntley
- *Amy Tan* (1996) by Barbara Kramer
- *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001) by Amy Tan

PAPER 1 MODERN PROSE 181

Chinua Achebe

SUBJECT VOCABULARY
post-colonial literature literature written about countries and cultures which are, or had been, governed under colonisation, usually by European countries and Britain in particular; post-colonial writers often come from heavily colonised regions such as Africa, India or Ireland

DID YOU KNOW?
Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* as a response to a famous novel of 1899 by the Polish writer, Joseph Conrad, called *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad's novel is also about European colonialism in Africa, but Achebe thought that the representation of native African life was racist and overly simplified. Achebe did not want Conrad's views about colonialism to become dominant, so he wrote *Things Fall Apart* to provide what he thought was a more accurate portrait.

THINGS FALL APART
CHINUA ACHEBE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT
Chinua Achebe was born in 1930 in the African country of Nigeria, which at the time of his birth was a colony under British rule. A member of the Igbo people of south-eastern Nigeria, Achebe was brought up with a mixture of traditional and European influences. His parents were converts to Christianity and while they respected Igbo traditions and raised him in its storytelling tradition (which would later heavily influence his writing), they also introduced him to Western literature. Achebe's exposure to Western literature was then further deepened through his elite English-language education. During colonial times, European novels about Africa tended to be escapist adventures depicting Africans as ignorant savages, and a growing resentment of this portrayal helped to fuel Achebe's decision to become a writer.

Achebe came to prominence thanks to the impact of his first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Written in English, it has been read and studied throughout the world and translated into 50 different languages. *Things Fall Apart* now stands as a leading work of **post-colonial literature**, which explores the colonial experience and its aftermath from the perspective of the colonised people. Set in the Igbo ('Ibo' in the novel) region during the years leading up to the establishment of British colonial rule in 1900, the story follows Okonkwo, a village leader and frightening warrior, whose life gradually unravels as change surrounds his homeland. It conveys the African view of colonialism that Achebe found so absent from European portrayals. Igbo proverbs and fables are incorporated into a narrative structure which is still familiar and easily approachable to readers of Western literature. Having now sold more than 8 million copies worldwide, prompted numerous critical studies and served as an inspiration for many African writers, *Things Fall Apart* is arguably the most important work of modern African literature.

Sources and adaptations / Other media / Further reading
When novels, plays or poetry have been adapted, some examples are listed to allow for a wider understanding of literary interpretations. Extra texts and supporting media are also suggested to encourage a wider understanding and promote a broader range of reading.

Student answers
Higher- and lower-level written answers annotated with marker comments to encourage understanding of the marking criteria.

Did you know?
Interesting facts to encourage wider thought and understanding around course texts.

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

The following tables give an overview of the assessment for this course.

We recommend that you study this information closely to help ensure that you are fully prepared for this course and know exactly what to expect in each part of the assessment.

This section summarises the examination papers that can be taken. Paper 1 is the compulsory unit for all students taking Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (9–1) English Literature. Paper 2 is taken by those who choose the 100 per cent examination route (Route 1). Those International GCSE students who choose coursework take Paper 3 instead of Paper 2 (Route 2).

Route 1: 100 per cent written examination paper (Paper 1 and Paper 2).

Route 2: 60 per cent written examination paper and 40 per cent internally assessed coursework (Paper 1 and Paper 3).

ROUTE 1

▼ PAPER 1	▼ PERCENTAGE	▼ MARK	▼ TIME	▼ AVAILABILITY
POETRY AND MODERN PROSE Written examination paper Paper code 4ET1/01 Externally set and assessed by Pearson Edexcel Single tier of entry	60%	90	2 hours	January and June examination series First assessment June 2018

▼ PAPER 2	▼ PERCENTAGE	▼ MARK	▼ TIME	▼ AVAILABILITY
MODERN DRAMA AND LITERARY HERITAGE TEXTS Written examination paper Paper code 4ET1/02 Externally set and assessed by Pearson Edexcel Single tier of entry	40%	60	1 hour 30 minutes	January and June examination series First assessment June 2018

ROUTE 2

PAPER 1	PERCENTAGE	MARK	TIME	AVAILABILITY
POETRY AND MODERN PROSE Written examination paper Paper code 4ET1/01 Externally set and assessed by Pearson Edexcel Single tier of entry	60%	90	2 hours	January and June examination series First assessment June 2018

PAPER 3	PERCENTAGE	MARK	TIME	AVAILABILITY
MODERN DRAMA AND LITERARY HERITAGE TEXTS Coursework Paper code 4ET1/03 Two teacher-devised assignments, internally set and assessed, and externally moderated by Pearson Edexcel	40%	60	n/a	January and June examination series First assessment June 2018

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES AND WEIGHTINGS

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION	% IN INTERNATIONAL GCSE
A01	Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement	30%
A02	Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects	40%
A03	Explore links and connections between texts	10%
A04	Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written	20%

RELATIONSHIP OF ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES TO UNITS

UNIT NUMBER	ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES			
	A01	A02	A03	A04
PAPER 1	13%	23%	10%	13%
PAPER 2 / PAPER 3	17%	17%	0%	7%
TOTAL FOR INTERNATIONAL GCSE	30%	40%	10%	20%

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY: ROUTE 1

PAPER 1	DESCRIPTION	MARKS	ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES
POETRY AND MODERN PROSE Paper code 4ET1/01	**Structure** Paper 1 assesses 60% of the total English Literature qualification. There will be three sections on the paper. Students must answer the question in Section A, one question from a choice of two in Section B and one question from a choice of two on one set text in Section C.		Questions will test the following Assessment Objectives: AO1 – 13% AO2 – 23% AO3 – 10% AO4 – 13%
	Section A: Unseen Poetry Students will apply their knowledge of poetic form, content and meaning to an unseen poem. Students must: ▪ demonstrate understanding of how writers create literary effects using, for example, imagery, descriptive skills, language choice, tone and mood, structure and form ▪ understand and use appropriate literary terminology ▪ identify and use relevant examples from poems.	20	
	Section B: Poetry Anthology Students will apply their knowledge of poetic form, content and meaning to compare poems. Students must: ▪ demonstrate understanding of how writers create literary effects using, for example, imagery, descriptive skills, language choice, tone and mood, structure and form ▪ understand and use appropriate literary terminology ▪ identify and use relevant examples from poems.	30	
	Section C: Modern Prose Students will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their chosen prose text. Students should also understand the relationship between their prose text and the context within which it was written.	40	

	Students must: ■ demonstrate a close understanding of their prose text ■ maintain a critical style ■ present an informed personal engagement ■ identify and use relevant examples from prose text ■ understand the influence of contextual factors on the interpretation of texts.		
	This is a single-tier examination paper and all questions cover the full ranges of grades from 9–1. The assessment duration is 2 hours. Closed book: texts are not allowed in the examination. However, students will be provided with the Anthology poems in the examination.	The total number of marks available is 90	

▼ PAPER 2	▼ DESCRIPTION	▼ MARKS	▼ ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES
MODERN DRAMA AND LITERARY HERITAGE TEXTS Paper code 4ET1/02	**Structure** Paper 2 assesses 40% of the total English Literature qualification. There will be two sections on the paper. Students must answer one question from a choice of two on one set text in Section A and one question from a choice of two on one set text in Section B.		Questions will test the following Assessment Objectives: AO1 – 17% AO2 – 17% AO4 – 7%
	Section A: Modern Drama Students will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their drama text, including the ways in which writers use language, form and structure to create effects. Students must: ■ demonstrate a close understanding of their drama text ■ maintain a critical style ■ present an informed personal engagement ■ understand how writers create literary effects ■ understand and use appropriate literary terminology ■ identify and use relevant examples from the play.	30	
	Section B: Literary Heritage Texts Students will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their text, including the ways in which writers use language, form and structure to create effects. Students should also understand the relationship between their text and the context in which it was written. Students must: ■ demonstrate a close understanding of their heritage text ■ maintain a critical style ■ present an informed personal engagement ■ understand how writers create literary effects ■ understand and use appropriate literary terminology ■ understand the influence of contextual factors on the interpretation of texts ■ identify and use relevant examples from the text.	30	

	This is a single-tier examination paper and all questions cover the full ranges of grades from 9–1. The assessment duration is 1 hour 30 minutes. Open book: texts are allowed in the examination.	The total number of marks available is 60	

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY: ROUTE 2

▼ PAPER 1	▼ DESCRIPTION	▼ MARKS	▼ ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES
POETRY AND MODERN PROSE Paper code 4ET1/01	**Structure** Paper 1 assesses 60% of the total English Literature qualification. There will be three sections on the paper. Students must answer the question in Section A, one question from a choice of two in Section B and one question from a choice of two on one set text in Section C.	n/a	Questions will test the following Assessment Objectives: AO1 – 13% AO2 – 23% AO3 – 10% AO4 – 13%
	Section A: Unseen Poetry Students will apply their knowledge of poetic form, content and meaning to an unseen poem. Students must: ■ demonstrate understanding of how writers create literary effects using, for example, imagery, descriptive skills, language choice, tone and mood, structure and form ■ understand and use appropriate literary terminology ■ identify and use relevant examples from poems.	20	
	Section B: Poetry Anthology Students will apply their knowledge of poetic form, content and meaning to compare poems. Students must: ■ demonstrate understanding of how writers create literary effects using, for example, imagery, descriptive skills, language choice, tone and mood, structure and form ■ understand and use appropriate literary terminology ■ identify and use relevant examples from poems.	30	
	Section C: Modern Prose Students will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their chosen prose text. Students should also understand the relationship between their prose text and the context within which it was written. Students must: ■ demonstrate a close understanding of their prose text ■ maintain a critical style ■ present an informed personal engagement ■ identify and use relevant examples from prose text ■ understand the influence of contextual factors on the interpretation of texts.	40	

	This is a single-tier examination paper and all questions cover the full ranges of grades from 9–1. The assessment duration is 2 hours. Closed book: texts are not allowed in the examination. However, students will be provided with the Anthology poems in the examination.	The total number of marks available is 90	

▼ PAPER 3	▼ DESCRIPTION	▼ MARKS	▼ ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES
MODERN DRAMA AND LITERARY HERITAGE TEXTS Paper code 4ET1/03	**Structure** Paper 3 coursework assesses 40% of the total English Literature qualification. The coursework option is open to centres that have been approved by Pearson Edexcel to conduct coursework. The assessment of Paper 3 is through two coursework assignments, internally set and assessed, and externally moderated by Pearson Edexcel.	n/a	Questions will test the following Assessment Objectives: AO1 – 17% AO2 – 17% AO4 – 7%
	Assignment A: Modern Drama Students will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their drama text, including the ways in which writers use language, form and structure to create effects. Students must: ■ demonstrate a close understanding of their drama text ■ maintain a critical style ■ present an informed personal engagement ■ understand how writers create literary effects ■ understand and use appropriate literary terminology ■ identify and use relevant examples from the play.	30	
	Section B: Literary Heritage Texts Students will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their text, including the ways in which writers use language, form and structure to create effects. Students should also understand the relationship between their text and the context in which it was written. Students must: ■ demonstrate a close understanding of their heritage text ■ maintain a critical style ■ present an informed personal engagement ■ understand how writers create literary effects ■ understand and use appropriate literary terminology ■ understand the influence of contextual factors on the interpretation of texts ■ identify and use relevant examples from the text.	30	
	This is a single-tier coursework paper and will cover the full ranges of grades from 9–1. There is no prescribed word length for responses to the coursework assignments. Typically, responses may be up to 1000 words, but there are no penalties for exceeding this guidance.	The total number of marks available is 60	

READING SKILLS

Assessment Objective 1

Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement

Assessment Objective 2

Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects

Assessment Objective 3

Explore links and connections between texts

Assessment Objective 4

Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

This chapter focuses on some core reading skills that you can apply to all parts of the English Literature course. Working through these lessons and activities will help you develop the reading skills you will need for the exams and coursework assignments.

The chapter is split into the following sections:

- Text analysis
- Use of language
- Fiction texts.

Throughout this course you will need to be able to meet the Assessment Objectives AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand the main ideas a writer is communicating
- summarise the key points of a text quickly
- build confidence in independent reading.

SKIMMING AND SCANNING

It can be difficult to know where to start when approaching a text for the first time. You need a methodical approach that allows you to understand the main ideas being communicated.

Skimming and scanning are two important reading techniques. They are often confused with one another, but they are very different skills. However, both help you to achieve the same aim: to read more quickly and effectively.

▲ Skimming and scanning are both important skills to use when reading texts.

SKIMMING

Skimming is useful when you want to quickly get a general idea of what a text is about. When you skim, you read through the text three to four times faster than when you read each word in order to get a sense of the topic, ideas and information being conveyed.

WHEN SHOULD I SKIM?

- When you have a lot to read in a short space of time.
- When revising topics to identify key information.
- When locating a passage in a text.
- When finding relevant material when planning an essay.

KEY POINT

Skimming and scanning are important reading techniques. Skimming is reading quickly to get a general sense of a text. Scanning involves looking through a text for specific information.

SCANNING

Scanning refers to reading through material to find specific information. When you scan, you run your eyes over the information in a text in order to pull out specific words, phrases or pieces of information. You may not be aware of it, but you scan through many different types of text in your daily life, from the television guide to the football results on a webpage.

WHEN SHOULD I SCAN?

- When consolidating information on theme or character.
- When locating a relevant quotation or section in a literature text.

SKIMMING AND SKIPPING

To skim effectively, you don't read everything – you must skip, too. What you read is more important than what you leave out. The following strategies for active reading will help you choose what to read and what to leave out.

- Highlight key points throughout the text.
- Look at each paragraph in turn and rephrase the main points in your own words.
- Underline any unfamiliar words. Can you use the context of the sentence to help you establish their meaning? If not, use a dictionary to help you.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

topic sentence the first sentence in a paragraph, often used to explain the key idea
chronological organised in linear time
flashback when the narrator of a story jumps out of the present in order to describe an event which happened in the past; often flashbacks are in the form of the memories of characters in the present

STRATEGIES FOR SKIMMING

- Read the chapter names: this will help you to find the relevant part of the text.
- Read the topic sentence (this will often give you a good sense of the ideas and structure of the whole text).
- Read the first and last paragraphs.

STRATEGIES FOR SCANNING

- For scanning to be successful, be sure of your purpose. Think about what information you are looking for before you begin to scan the text.
- Is it arranged in chapters or organised in sections of some kind? Is it chronological or does it use other devices such as flashback?
- Use your index finger to help you to identify key information, for example, a quotation about a particular character. Move your finger down the text at the same time as your eyes to help you to maintain focus.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CREATIVITY

▼ SKIMMING AND SCANNING RACE

▶ How fast are you at finding the information you need?

You need a dictionary, a pen, a piece of paper and a partner. Follow the instructions below carefully.

STEP 1

Open the dictionary at any page.

STEP 2

Write down the page number in the margin of a piece of paper.

STEP 3

Close your eyes and place your finger somewhere on the page.

STEP 4

See what word you have chosen. Write down its (first) definition, but NOT the word itself.

STEP 5

Repeat steps 1–4 until you have ten definitions on your page.

STEP 6

Now swap pieces of paper with your partner. See who can complete the page with all the words first.

STEP 7

Once you have finished the race, write a paragraph that uses all of your partner's words.

HINT

Use your own words in a summary wherever possible. Simply repeating sentences from the original text does not show that you have understood what the writer is communicating.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

▼ SUMMARISING INFORMATION

Once you are confident that you understand the text, you need to be able to summarise the key points that the writer makes. A good summary phrases these points in a **concise** and **clear** style.
Choose a prose extract and write a summary of it.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- interpret the information and ideas in a text
- read between the lines to work out what the text implies.

KEY POINT

Explicit meaning is where the writer **ex**plains their ideas.
Implicit meaning is where the writer **im**plies their ideas; you have to **in**fer and **im**agine based on what you know.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

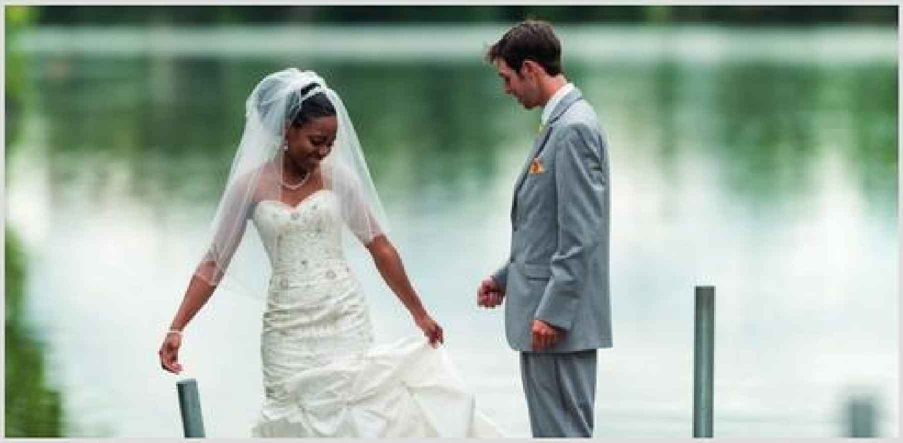
infer read between the lines

EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT IDEAS

To be a good reader, you need to understand both what a text tells you directly, or explicitly, and to infer based on what you think the writer indirectly, or implicitly, suggests in their text. This may be about the writer's views, character or theme.

EXPLICIT MEANING

This picture shows a woman in a dress standing close to a man in a suit.



▲ A couple on their wedding day

IMPLICIT MEANING

You can infer that this is a wedding photo because you have experience of seeing this type of image and it being related to weddings.

LITERARY DETECTIVES

Sherlock Holmes is famous for deducing solutions to problems by inferring meaning from clues. Analysing a text is a a similar process.

▼ FROM *THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE* BY ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

I placed my revolver, cocked, upon the top of the wooden case behind which I crouched. Holmes shot the slide across the front of his lantern, and left us in pitch darkness - such an absolute darkness as I have never before experienced. The smell of hot metal remained to assure us that the light was still there, ready to flash out at a moment's notice. To me, with my nerves worked up to a pitch of expectancy, there was something depressing and subduing in the sudden gloom, and in the cold, dank air of the vault.

"They have but one retreat," whispered Holmes. "That is back through the house into Saxe-Coburg Square. I hope that you have done what I asked you, Jones?"

"I have an inspector and two officers waiting at the front door."

"Then we have stopped all the holes. And now we must be silent and wait."

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, COLLABORATION

▼ DEDUCING AND INFERRING

1 Reading the extract, what do you know explicitly? What can you infer based on the information given?

2 Select three sentences which sum up what happens in the extract. Compare your choices with a partner.

3 Discuss some of the ways in which Conan Doyle builds up tension, for example, by emphasising the darkness.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CREATIVITY

▼ DETECTIVE STORIES

Follow the prompts below to construct your own Sherlock Holmes-style opening.

- The detective is at home alone or with their sidekick. What can you show about this character from the place in which they live?
- They look out of the window and see someone on the street – what can they tell about the person? Remember Holmes observes people very closely.
- The person rings the doorbell: it's a new client with a problem.
- The detective interviews the client, finding out as much about the case as they can. Make sure the client tells the story in an interesting way.
- The detective decides to take the case. The client leaves. The detective should briefly discuss the case with their sidekick. Remember to show character through dialogue – the sidekick should ask more questions.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

dialogue conversation between two or more people

connotations ideas linked to a word; ideas that have become associated with a word

KEY VOCABULARY

Writers use a lot of similar phrases to convey meaning. Don't just use 'shows': using some of these synonyms could improve your writing.

highlights
emphasises
suggests
demonstrates
implies
reveals
illustrates
signifies
echoes
represents
has connotations of
is redolent of
reflects
connotes
exposes
denotes
introduces
portrays
conveys

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- organise your ideas and structure your writing clearly and with direction.

POINT-EVIDENCE-EXPLAIN (P-E-E)

When writing, it is important to express your points in a clear and structured way. Writing is therefore organised into paragraphs. Each paragraph should be self-contained and make sense on its own. It should be constructed of a group of sentences which all link to the same idea, theme or topic.

MAKING THE PERFECT POINT

KEY POINT

Follow these four rules for excellent writing.

1. Structure: ideas must be clearly expressed and logically sequenced.
2. Paragraphs: paragraphs should be well constructed and follow on from one another. Quotations should be correctly presented.
3. Vocabulary: use a wide range of key vocabulary with precision.
4. Spelling, punctuation and grammar: maintain accuracy throughout.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

quotations words from a text
quotation marks punctuation to denote a quotation
direct speech exactly what someone has said

The P-E-E chain stands for **Point-Evidence-Explain**. This is the order in which you should organise the information in each paragraph.

1. State your basic **point** clearly and concisely. Your point should be relevant to the set task or question.
2. Demonstrate how you can support your opening statement with reference to a specific part of the text you are writing about. Quotations can be used as **evidence** to support what you are saying and help make your point. Try to select words or phrases from the text that precisely support your point and keep them as brief as possible. Use inverted commas, also known as quotation marks, to indicate where you have used words directly from text.
3. Add an **explanation**. The first step is to explain how your quotation supports the point you have made so that your reader knows why you have included it.

PERFECT PUNCTUATION

Short Literature quotations of a single line or part of a line should be incorporated within quotation marks as part of the running text of your essay, ‘just like this’.

Quotations of two or more full lines should be indented from the main body of the text and introduced by a colon:

> ‘This is how you would quote a longer piece of text, but do make sure that it is all relevant.’

PARAGRAPH SANDWICHES

HINT

A quotation does not have to be direct speech: you can quote evidence from a science journal or a famous play in the same way.

You can think of your paragraph like a sandwich or burger, with three separate parts.

Top bun: opening topic sentence. Introduces the paragraph and your main idea.

Filling: supporting sentences. This is the main part. Describe and explain your main point using quotes and evidence to complement and support it.

Bottom bun: closing sentence. A concluding sentence to bring everything together.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS PROBLEM SOLVING, ANALYSIS, REASONING

▼ SUMMARISING WITH P-E-E

Read this paragraph summarising the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. Copy the paragraph and colour code or label each part of the P-E-E chain. Each part of the chain may be more than one sentence.

> Set in the Great Depression of the 1930s, the novel tells of the close friendship between two farm workers, George and Lennie: 'I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you'. The other men on the ranch are described as 'the loneliest guys in the world' and George and Lennie are proud of the fact that they have each other. The repetition of the second person pronoun 'you' here emphasises the close and reciprocal bond between the men. George and Lennie often repeat this line to one another when they are talking about their dreams for the future and Lennie is always excited when George reaffirms their friendship in this way. Their friendship gives them hope and joy in a desolate world.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ P-E-E-RFECT LITERATURE PARAGRAPHS

Using a set text from your English Literature studies, write your own question and P-E-E chain paragraph about a character or theme. The following questions will help you to construct a question based on your own reading.

- **How is the main character portrayed in the novel?**
- **What is the main theme of the novel?**
- **What is the author trying to convey through the novel?**
- **How does the opening set the scene for the novel?**

Give your question and paragraph to a partner and check one another's work. Consider the following questions and clearly label examples of each within the paragraph. Does the paragraph include the following?

- A p**oint.**
- Some **evidence**: a quotation or example.
- An **explanation**: does it explore the quotation and what it shows? This may include:
  - some comment on the **language or literary devices** used
  - some understanding of the **writer's attitude**
  - a **personal response** to the characters or themes of a text.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- approach a fiction text critically
- build confidence in responding to a text
- understand how writers use language to influence their readers.

HINT

Annotating a text means taking notes to help explain and evaluate it. Use the following checklist to help you annotate a new text.

- Underline powerful verbs.
- Box given or factual information about character/setting.
- Circle adjectives.
- Squiggle under clues, hints and implied information.
- Next to the 'clues and hints' write a word or two in the margin to say what it hints at.
- Join up anything that seems to go together and add up to the same thing. Make a note of what it is in the margin.

Try to pick out:

- any interesting descriptive words or phrases
- comparisons or contrasts
- links or patterns in the language.
- unusual images
- words which carry suggested meanings
- anything else which you find interesting or effective.

EVALUATING A TEXT

This section will help you to improve your reading skills by learning how to approach a text critically.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ FORMING OPINIONS ON A TEXT

Read these lines from *Private Peaceful* by Michael Morpurgo.

> I see men running, staggering, falling.
>
> I am coughing, retching, choking.
>
> I have to breathe now. I can't run without breathing.
>
> Half blinded by my mask I trip and fall, crashing my head against the trench wall, knocking myself half senseless.
>
> I am on my hands and knees vomiting violently.
>
> I wrench off my mask, gasping for good air.

1 What do you think the purpose of the writing is?
2 How does the writer use language to convey meaning and mood?
3 How do the varied sentence structures affect the mood?
4 What is the effect of the author using the present tense and a first-person narrator?

▼ FROM *PRIVATE PEACEFUL* BY MICHAEL MORPURGO

The gas is only feet away now. In a moment it will be on me, around me, in me. I crouch down hiding my face between my knees, hands over my helmet, praying it will float over my head, over the top of the trenches and seek out someone else. But it does not. It's all around me. I tell myself I will not breathe. I must not breathe. Through a yellow mist I see the trench filling up with it. It drifts into the dugouts, snaking into every nook and cranny, looking for me. It wants to seek us all out, to kill us all. Every one of us.

CREATING ATMOSPHERE

You can use P-E-E to show how Morpurgo creates atmosphere in the extract.

- **Point**: Morpurgo shows that the narrator is panicking as the gas approaches.
- **Evidence**: Tommo describes the 'yellow mist' as 'snaking into every nook and cranny' 'to kill us all'.
- **Explanation**: Morpurgo's choice of language is striking and unsettling. The verb 'snaking' creates unpleasant images of snakes that can get everywhere, killing everyone around Tommo.

RHETORICAL DEVICES

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

rhetorical device using language in a special way to achieve an effect
emotive language language that produces and emotional reaction
personal pronoun a word used instead of a noun, such as 'I', 'you' or 'they'
repetition saying the same thing more than once to highlight its importance
rule of three literary device where three things are linked or something is repeated three times in order to emphasise them and ensure they are memorable

Rhetorical devices are often used in texts which seek to present a particular point of view or opinion. Match the rhetorical devices with the correct example sentence.

Emotive language	Kittens need a warm, dry, comfortable place for snoozing.
Personal pronouns	These vulnerable, weak kittens need our help.
Repetition	Over 100,000,000 cats need re-homing every week.
Rule of three	You can help us make a difference; all we need is £2 a month.
Hyperbole	Every year the number of cats on the streets increases, every year it is up to us to rescue them.

▼ FROM *PRIVATE PEACEFUL* BY MICHAEL MORPURGO

"They'll come marching through here burning your houses, killing your children, and yes, violating your women. They've beaten brave little Belgium, swallowed her up in one gulp. And now they've taken a fair slice of France too. I'm here to tell you unless we beat them at their own game, they'll gobble us up as well." His eyes raked over us.

"Well? Do you want the Hun here? Do you?"

"No!" came the shout, and I was shouting along with them.

"Shall we knock the stuffing out of them then?"

"Yes!" we roared in unison.

The sergeant major nodded. "Good. Very Good. Then we shall need you." He was pointing his stick now into the crowd, picking out the men. "You, and you, and you." He was looking straight at me now, into my eyes. "And you too, my lad!"

Until that very moment it had honestly never occurred to me that what he was saying had anything to do with me. I had been an onlooker. No longer.

"Your king needs you. Your country needs you. And all the brace lads out in France need you too." His face broke into a smile as he fingered his immaculate mustache. "And remember one thing, lads – and I can vouch for this – all the girls love a soldier."

KEY POINT

When evaluating a text, you need to understand what the text is about and the points it makes. You need to understand how the language used helps to achieve this and be able to give examples. It is also important to give your personal response to a text.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS ANALYSIS, REASONING

▼ PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE

▶ **Read the Sergeant-Major's speech. How does he persuade men to enlist into the army?**

Work on your own and annotate the passage, considering the persuasive devices used and their effect. Then put your ideas into P-E-E format.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- identify the main parts of speech
- consolidate your understanding of the function of each.

WORD CLASSES

Words may be divided into groups called parts of speech. Words are classified as one of nine parts of speech:

verb, noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, interjection, determiners.

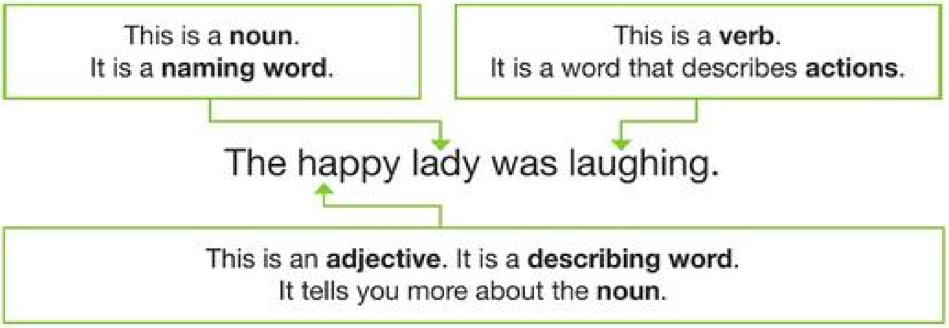
PARTS OF SPEECH

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

verb a word that describes actions
noun a word that represents a person, place, object or quality
pronoun a word that is used instead of a noun
adjective a word that describes a noun or pronoun
adverb a word that describes a verb or an adjective
preposition a word that is used before a noun or pronoun to show time, place or direction
conjunction a word that joins parts of a sentence
interjection a word used to express a strong feeling
determiner a word that is used before a noun in order to show which thing you mean

Each part of speech signifies how the word is used, not what a word is. This means that the same word can be a noun in one sentence and a verb or adjective in the next. For example:

- Books are made of ink, paper and glue. (Noun, subject of sentence)
- Deborah waits patiently while Bridget books the tickets. (Verb, its subject is Bridget)



This is a **noun**.
It is a **naming word**.

This is a **verb**.
It is a word that describes **actions**.

The happy lady was laughing.

This is an **adjective**. It is a **describing word**.
It tells you more about the **noun**.

▲ Laughter demonstrates her happiness.

HINT

Many verbs are 'doing' words and are used to describe actions, such as 'the boy **kicked** the ball'.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ IDENTIFYING PARTS OF SPEECH

In the following sentences, circle the adjectives, tick the nouns and underline the verbs.

1 I tripped over the uneven floor.
2 The silly boy crashed his new bike.
3 When the old lady reached her house, she sat down.
4 We saw wild horses in the forest.
5 The large crowd cheered as the skilful player scored.
6 The giggling girls annoyed the teacher.
7 A prickly hedgehog snuffled in the dry leaves.
8 The lazy man was sleeping under the tall tree.

PROPER NOUNS

Nouns that name particular things are called proper nouns and begin with capital letters. The names of people and places, days of the week, brand names, company names and titles of films are all proper nouns, e.g. Yara, France, Thursday, Google, Ford, *Avatar*.

PREPOSITIONS

A preposition tells you the position of one thing in relation to another.

Altamash hid **behind** the tree.
You cross **over** a bridge.

KEY POINT

All words are divided into nine classes, known as parts of speech.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

Write a suitable word in each gap in the following sentences. In the brackets write what part of speech it is.

1 Sam put the ____________ suitcase on the floor. (______________)
2 Athens is the capital of ________________. (______________)
3 The mountaineers ____________to the summit. (______________)
4 The children sang loudly at the ______________. (______________)
5 The cat's ______________ was soft and silky. (______________)
6 The helicopter _____________ over the motorway. (______________)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- explore and develop your interpretations of language
- consider the associations that words hold and how they can be used to create meaning in a text.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

denotation what something actually is

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

CONNOTATIONS

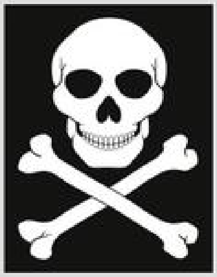
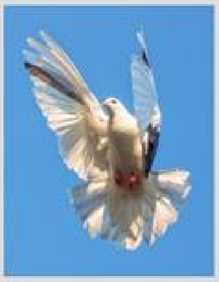
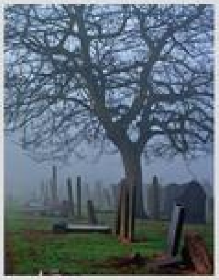
Connotations are the associations and ideas which a particular word or image suggests to a reader. It is important to consider the connotations which a text suggests in order to explore its effects in detail.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS INTERPRETATION

▼ CONNOTATIONS OF IMAGES

Copy and complete the table, writing the denotation and the connotation (what it makes you think of) for each image. On a piece of paper, draw your own example of a sign or image. Ask a partner to look at your image and say what the denotation and connotation of it are.

▼ IMAGE/SIGN	▼ DENOTATION	▼ CONNOTATION
	Skull and crossed bones	Pirates, poison, danger
		
		

old beggars under sacks This simile describing the soldiers as old beggars shows how much the war has affected them as they should be young and healthy men; calling their clothes sacks reinforces this and creates a sense of sympathy for them – this image is far removed from that of the heroic soldiers portrayed in propaganda.

Gas! GAS! Repetition of 'gas' combined with the exclamation marks and capital letters convey the soldiers' fear and panic.

ecstasy of fumbling Suggests an inability for the soldiers to do simple tasks due to the panic; ecstasy here means loss of control rather than happiness and surprises the reader's expectations as ecstasy usually has positive connotations.

DID YOU KNOW?

Wilfred Owen was a young soldier during the First World War (1914–18) and went on to become the most famous of the English poets who wrote about their horrifying experiences of life in the trenches. Owen was befriended and influenced by the poet, Siegfried Sassoon, whom he met at Craiglockhart Hospital where they had both been sent to recover. After being discharged, Owen died in battle on 4 November 1918, just a week before the end of the war.

KEY POINT

Writers use connotations to convey their ideas to readers. Inferring information from a text is a critical skill in understanding what message and ideas the author wants to convey to readers.

▼ 'DULCE ET DECORUM EST' BY WILFRED OWEN

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori.

ACTIVITY 2 SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ CONNOTATIONS OF WORDS

Read the poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est'.

1 What do you think the poem is about? Discuss with a partner.
2 Find out what the final two lines mean. Why do you think Owen chose the title of the poem?
3 How does the poem make you feel?
4 Individually, continue to annotate the poem. Pick out words and phrases that have strong connotations.
5 Write three paragraphs, giving examples, about how Owen presents the horrors of war in 'Dulce et Decorum Est'.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- identify the main sentence types.

DIFFERENT SENTENCE TYPES

A sentence is a group of words that make sense on their own. It is a basic component of communication. Clumsy sentence structure leads to writing that is grammatically incorrect. Poor sentence structure will also prevent your ideas flowing in a coherent and logical way and make it much more difficult for people to understand what you are trying to convey. A writer's use of sentence structure often helps to convey meaning in a text and it is important to be able to identify and comment on this.

TYPES OF SENTENCES

Sentences are the basis of communication.

A **declarative** (or statement) **conveys** information.

> My car is red.

An **interrogative** (or question) **asks** for information.

> Does it go fast?

An **imperative** (or command) **tells** someone to do something.

> Get in.

An **exclamation** shows someone **feels strongly** about something.

> It's great!

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ SENTENCE TYPES

Match the sentences with the sentence types.

1 The door is open.
2 Go and have a wash.
3 What a lovely surprise!
4 Have you seen my shorts?

statement
question
command
exclamation

SIMPLE SENTENCES

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

clause a group of words built around a finite verb

A **simple sentence** contains a single subject, a verb and an object. It contains only a single clause.

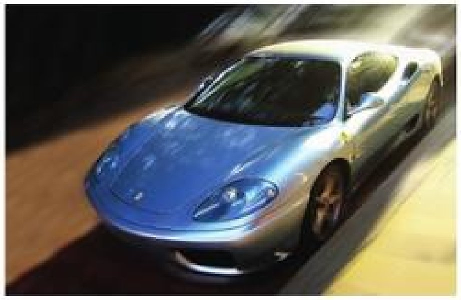
> The boy ate the chocolate.

Single sentences may contain other elements, but they only express one thing.

THE PARTS OF A CLAUSE

HINT

To determine the subject of a sentence, first isolate the verb and then make a question by placing 'who?' or 'what?' before it. The answer is the subject of the sentence.



▲ A silver sports car

A sentence must contain the following elements.

- The **subject** identifies the topic of a clause, in other words, what it is about. Every complete sentence contains two parts: a subject and a predicate. The subject is what or whom the sentence is about and the predicate tells you something about the subject. In the following sentences, the predicate is enclosed in brackets ( ), while the subject is highlighted.

> Douglas (runs).
> My hockey teacher and his dog (run around the school pitches every morning).

- The **verb** identifies the action of a clause, in other words, what happens.
- The **object** identifies who or what is directly affected by the action of the verb. This is always a noun or pronoun. Two kinds of objects follow verbs: direct and indirect objects. To determine if a verb has a direct object, isolate the verb and make it into a question by placing 'whom?' or 'what?' after it. The answer, if there is one, is the direct object.

> The lawyer drove a new silver sports car.
> Her boyfriend gave her a bunch of flowers.

The second example also contains an indirect object: in this case the recipient of the direct object ('her'). To determine if a verb has an indirect object, isolate the verb and ask 'to whom?', 'to what?', 'for whom?', or 'for what?' after it. The answer, if there is one, is the indirect object.

Not all verbs are followed by objects.

> After work, David usually walks home.

Verbs that take objects are known as transitive verbs. Verbs not followed by objects are called intransitive verbs. Some verbs can be both, depending on the context.

A sentence may also contain the following components.

- The **complement** gives extra information about the subject or object.
- The **adverbial** gives additional information about a situation: when, where and how it happened. One clause can contain several instances:

> Later, Oscar kicked the ball fiercely across the field.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ PARTS OF A SENTENCE

Find the subject, verb and object in the following sentences. Can you find any adverbials as well?

1 Last week Peggy redecorated the pub.
2 Are you hungry yet?
3 Martin, be quiet.
4 Tuesday was very rainy and cold.

COMPOUND SENTENCES

A **compound sentence** consists of two simple sentences (clauses) joined by a conjunction. A conjunction is a joining word. It may be used to join two sentences together.

It was raining. I put up my umbrella. (Two sentences)
It was raining so I put up my umbrella. (One sentence with a conjunction)

▲ Carry an umbrella in case of rain.

ACTIVITY 3

SKILLS ADAPTIVE LEARNING

▼ USING CONJUNCTIONS

Make these pairs of sentences into one sentence using a FANBOYS conjunction.

1 The lion looked fierce. It was tame.
2 I hurt my ankle. I fell off my bike.
3 It rained hard. I got soaked.

HINT

Remember the conjunctions that you can use to create a compound sentence by using the acronym

FANBOYS:

For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So

SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

KEY POINT

Understanding types and parts of sentences will help you to analyse language. Well-constructed sentences will ensure that your writing is clear and that meanings are conveyed properly.

Subordinate clauses are often present in sentences. They are called subordinate as they are second to the main action in the sentence; they give additional information that the sentence doesn't need in order to function.

> After his Dad gave him some pocket money, Andrew went to the cinema.

'After his Dad gave him some pocket money' is a subordinate clause. Anything between commas, dashes or brackets would be subordinate clauses too.

COMPLEX SENTENCES

HINT

Remember these points about punctuation in sentences:

- When you are writing, you need to use the right sentence punctuation. Using punctuation will show the person who is reading your writing where the sentences begin and end.
- A sentence must begin with a capital letter.
- A sentence must end with a full stop (.), a question mark (?), or an exclamation mark (!).
- Sometimes people confuse the punctuation to use at the end of a sentence. You can use commas (,), colons (:) or semicolons (;) in your writing, but they should never be used instead of a full stop.

A **complex sentence** contains a main sentence and one or more subordinate clauses that contribute to the meaning of the statement.

ACTIVITY 4

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ MAIN AND SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

1 Find the main and the subordinate clauses in the following sentences.

a I fixed the car while you were polishing your nails.
b Pasha plays the violin, whereas his sister cannot.
c Wherever you travel, do not stray from the path.
d Rain falls if the clouds become heavy.

2 Write a good ending for each sentence.

a I will come with you if ______________________________
b I can't help you unless ______________________________
c I will make a cup of tea ______________________________
d I climbed the mountain although ________________________

ACTIVITY 5

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ SIMPLE, COMPOUND OR COMPLEX?

Are the following sentences simple, compound or complex?

1 They stared longingly at the pictures which reminded them so much of home.
2 The cat slept and the children played outside in the white snow.
3 Although she has money, she buys few luxuries.
4 The tree swayed dangerously in the wind.
5 I studied the envelope cautiously and opened the letter.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- use a full range of sentence structures
- control and vary sentence structure for effect in your writing.

SENTENCES FOR EFFECTS

When sentence structure is repetitive and boring, writing is less interesting. Learning how to use sentence structure for effect will help you to engage your reader.

Little variety in sentence structure → Skilful control in the construction of varied sentence forms

EDINGLY OPENERS: VARYING SENTENCE STARTERS FOR IMPACT

EDINGLY openers consist of words ending in -ED, -ING (verbs) and -LY (adverbs). They can be an engaging way to begin sentences.

HINT

Use a comma or exclamation mark after the opener.

▶ **How could you change these sentences using this technique?**

1 I walked through the dark alley and suddenly a hand reached out and grabbed my shoulder.
2 I was breathing deeply as I crept through the deep, dark wood.
3 I was trapped and could not see a way out.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ EXPLORING SENTENCE TYPES

What is suspense? How do writers build suspense? Why do people like a good mystery? What do you expect from a suspense story?

Read the extract and see how many sentence types you can identify. Does it create a sense of suspense?

> The window shattered, sending glass cascading in all directions. Flames exploded into the room. I ducked, keeping my body as low as I could, desperately trying to avoid the smoke that was rapidly streaming across the ceiling. I scanned the room for other exits and was glad to see a small window on the far wall. The smoke was getting denser and started to expand, the cloud reaching down from the ceiling to the floor. My brain shouted, 'Move!' Frozen. Taking a deep breath of clean air, possibly my last, I pushed away from the wall to safety. As I struggled to open the window, I felt my heart pounding. My lungs screamed for air. The smoke descended and I worked blind, my eyes stinging. I pulled frantically at the catches, felt them give and tumbled out onto the ground below. I felt the heat escaping from the open window above and started to crawl slowly away.

▲ A blazing building allows for a story full of suspense.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, DECISION MAKING

▼ CREATING SUSPENSE

Compare the two extracts below and consider how effectively each has created a feeling of suspense. The first is written using short simple sentences and the second uses long complex sentences. Copy and complete the table, writing down the effects of using each type of sentence.

EXTRACT 1

Running. Faster. Faster. She grabbed the handle and turned it. Pushing the door open, she moved inside. No one was there. She turned and fled in the opposite direction.

EXTRACT 2

Jane stood in the doorway collecting her thoughts, delaying her decision until the last possible moment. As she plucked up her courage, she studied the door in front of her. It was crafted from an ancient-looking wood, the handle a simple metal ring. Jane glanced down at her shaking hand as she stretched out to turn the handle. She took two deep breaths, brushing her fringe from her pale face with nervous fingers. She stood a while, thoughts racing through her mind. Then, at last, she was ready. Grasping the handle, she turned it slowly; pushing the heavy door in front of her, she stepped into the hallway.

▼ SHORT, SIMPLE SENTENCES	▼ COMPLEX AND LONGER SENTENCES
Develop tension	Give a detailed picture of the action

KEY POINT

Sentence structure can be used for particular effect. For example, short, simple sentences can be used to build suspense or a sense of action, whilst longer, complex sentences may be helpful in creating a layered character description.

ACTIVITY 3

SKILLS INTERPRETATION, CREATIVITY

▼ ADAPTING SENTENCE TYPES FOR EFFECT

Re-write the following extract as three sentences. What is the effect?

> Ryan stood as still as stone, listening intently, but the faint rustling continued from inside the bedroom, so putting his good eye to the keyhole, he peered into the dimly lit room.

Re-write the following extract as five sentences. What is the effect?

> He squinted through the gloom of the interior, which was quite deserted, with a single candle burning near the altar, thinking that it was sad to see an empty church on Christmas Eve, but, shrugging the thought away, he began a careful inspection of the places where the statue might have been concealed.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand how to identify figurative language
- consider how figurative language is used for effect in creating character, atmosphere and emotion.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figurative language is used to create powerful imagery in texts. It can be used by writers or poets to create atmosphere, mood, tone, emotion, or to add to your understanding of descriptions of character or setting.

Figurative language works by making comparisons between two things. It therefore provides the reader with a strong visual image to identify with. The most common figurative techniques are metaphor, simile and personification.

KEY POINT

Similes and metaphors are sometimes confused. Remember that similes compare using 'like' or 'as', while metaphors make a more direct comparison of one thing to another. For example, 'She's as fierce as a tiger' is a simile, but 'She's a tiger when she's angry' is a metaphor.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

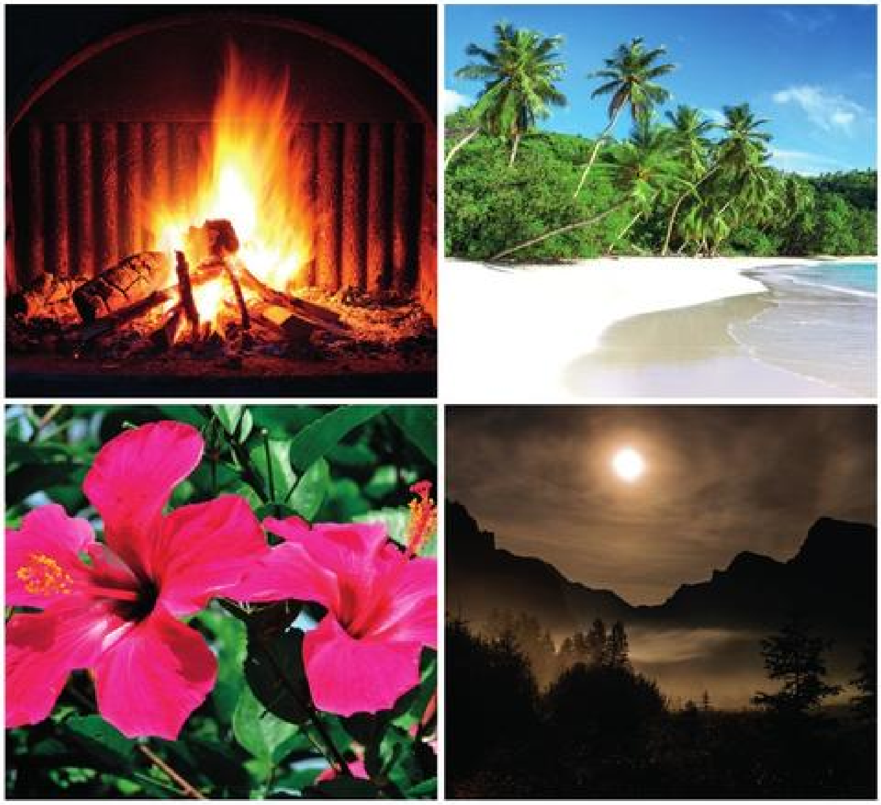
metaphor	describing something by comparing it to an image which it resembles, in a way that suggests the object is the image
simile	similar to a metaphor, a description that says that an object is *like* an image rather than that *it is* the image
personification	when something which is not human is made to sound human by attributing human qualities to it

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ USING FIGURATIVE DESCRIPTIONS

Look at the photos and write your own figurative descriptions of each. For example: *The amber flames leapt and danced*. 'Leapt' and 'danced' are personification, emphasising the active nature of the fire and likening it to a person dancing. *The beach was like a white ribbon of paper*. This simile conveys the colour and shape of the beach.



FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN PROSE

Settings can be used in a text to suggest a mood, ideas or feelings that are important to your wider reading of a text. Read the following extract, considering the way in which the setting is described.

DID YOU KNOW?
Pathetic fallacy is when inanimate objects or things in nature, such as the weather, reflect what is going on in the scene. For example, if the weather is hot, sunny and there are people everywhere, it may represent a 'happy' scene. If the weather is dark, cold and stormy, you can usually predict that something bad is going to happen.

▼ FROM *LORD OF THE FLIES* BY WILLIAM GOLDING

Ralph disentangled himself cautiously and stole away through the branches. In a few seconds the fat boy's grunts were behind him and he was hurrying towards the screen that laid between him and the lagoon. He climbed over a broken trunk and was out of the jungle.

The shore was fledged with palm trees. These stood or leaned or reclined against the light and their green feathers were a hundred feet up in the air. The ground beneath them was a bank covered with coarse grass, torn everywhere by the upheavals of fallen trees, scattered with decaying coconuts and palm saplings. Behind this was the darkness of the forest proper and the open space of the scar. Ralph stood, one hand against a grey trunk, and screwed up his eyes against the shimmering water. Out there, perhaps a mile away, the white surf flinked on a coral reef, and beyond that the open sea was a dark blue. Within the irregular arc of the coral lagoon was still as a mountain lake – blue of all the shades a shadowy green and purple. The beach between the palm terrace and the water was a thin bow stave, endless apparently, for to Ralph's left the perspectives of palm and beach and water drew to a point at infinity; and always, almost visible was the heat.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbolic where a person, object or event is used by a writer to convey a meaning beyond its literal meaning
contrast a literary device where two objects, people or ideas are placed next to each other to highlight their differences

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ ANALYSING DESCRIPTIONS

Annotate the extract from *Lord of the Flies*, considering the following two questions.

- **How is the island described? How is the setting outside the island described? Might these places be symbolic?**
- **How does the way in which this contrast is set up make the reader feel about the novel?**

ACTIVITY 3

SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, COMMUNICATION

▼ DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

Write a short descriptive passage that gives a sense of place. You are not allowed to name the place, or say where it is. Concentrate on its indirect portrayal through language. Swap passages with a partner: can you guess the place your partner has described?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand and analyse how writers introduce and develop fictional characters in their writing.

CHARACTER, ATMOSPHERE AND EMOTION

Understanding character is not easy. Good writers subtly reveal aspects of a character's personality through a combination of description, behaviour and dialogue.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CREATIVITY, COMMUNICATION

▼ WHAT'S IN YOUR POCKET?

The best way to approach character is to understand how characters are created, to put yourself in someone else's shoes or, in this case, pocket!

Create an imaginary character. Think of a few details about them such as name, age and job. Now imagine which objects they might carry in their pocket or bag. Write down or draw at least three of these and put them into an envelope. You have now created your character's 'pocket' or 'bag'.

Swap envelopes with a partner. Remove the items from your partner's envelope, one item at a time. Try to imagine what kind of person would own these items. Share your ideas with your partner.

Write a short paragraph about the character your partner created, using some of the items in their 'pocket' to develop the character.

CHARACTER IN NOVELS

▲ Liza Minelli as Sally Bowles in *Cabaret*, the film version of *Goodbye to Berlin*

INTRODUCING A CHARACTER

It is often said that first impressions are the most important, and this is often true of fictional characters. The following extract from Christopher Isherwood's novel *Goodbye to Berlin* introduces the memorable and quirky character Sally Bowles.

▼ FROM *GOODBYE TO BERLIN* BY CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

A few minutes later, Sally herself arrived.

"Am I terribly late, Fritz darling?"

"Only half of an hour, I suppose", Fritz drawled, beaming with proprietary pleasure. "May I introduce Mr Isherwood – Miss Bowles? Mr Isherwood is commonly known as Chris."

"I'm not," I said. "Fritz is about the only person who's ever called me Chris in my life."

▶

Sally laughed. She was dressed in black silk, with a small cape over her shoulders and a little cap like a page-boy's stuck jauntily on one side of her head:

"Do you mind if I use your telephone, sweet?"

"Sure. Go right ahead." Fritz caught my eye. "Come into the other room, Chris. I want to show you something." He was evidently longing to hear my first impressions of Sally, his new acquisition.

"For heaven's sake, don't leave me alone with this man!" she exclaimed. "Or he'll seduce me down the telephone. He's most terribly passionate."

As she dialed the number, I noticed that her finger-nails were pained emerald green, a colour unfortunately chosen, for it called attention to her hands, which were much stained by cigarette-smoking and as dirty as a little girl's. She was dark enough to be Fritz's sister. Her face was long and thin, powdered dead white. She had very large brown eyes which should have been darker, to match her hair and the pencil she used for her eyebrows.

"Hilloo," she cooed, pursing her brilliant cherry lips as though she were going to kiss the mouthpiece: "Ist das Du, mein Liebling?" Her mouth opened in a fatuously sweet smile. Fritz and I sat watching her, like a performance at the theatre.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ BUILDING A SENSE OF CHARACTER

Read the extract from *Goodbye to Berlin*. How does Isherwood build up a vivid sense of character in this extract? Consider his use of colour, the use of direct speech and any adjectival and adverbial descriptions. Write at least two P-E-E paragraphs about it.

ACTIVITY 3

SKILLS ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY

▼ CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Using the techniques you have considered, write your own short, vivid character description that begins with the description of your character's shoes. You could choose to develop your character based on the character created in Activity 1 or start with a new idea.

CONSIDERING CHARACTER

Consider the following prompts to help extend your understanding of characters. You can apply this to the prose and drama texts that you are studying.

How they appear to others: What kinds of words are used to describe their features, build, clothing? What does the writer want to suggest to the reader about the character's behaviour, attitude, or interests?

What they do: What can the reader infer about the characters from their actions and behaviour?

What they say: Does the writer use direct speech? What does this tell you about what the character thinks, feels or is likely to do?

How they say it: How does the writer make the character speak? Are they always talking about the same thing? Do they have a particular way of talking, e.g. dialect, tone? What is the writer saying about their background, feelings or interests?

What other characters say and think about them: How are you made to see them through other people's eyes? Do other characters like or dislike them, admire or despise them, trust or distrust them? Do you believe what others say about them?

ACTIVITY 4

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ CHARACTER IN POEMS

Character is not unique to prose and poems often present you with strong and well-drawn characters. Consider 'Dulce et Decorum Est', by Wilfred Owen (the text is on page 15), and answer the following questions:

1 Why do the poem's characters remain nameless?
2 How is the description of the men in the first verse used to build up a strong visual image?
3 What do the final two verses tell you about the narrator's relationship with death?
4 How does the poem make you feel about the narrator?
5 Why do you think Owen wrote 'Dulce et Decorum Est'?

KEY POINT

Understanding character is a critical part of analysing a text. Authors can convey meaning through characters' words and actions and how they interact with each other.

WRITING ABOUT CHARACTER

Characters can be used to show how a writer feels about a bigger theme or issue. Wilfred Owen's focus on the soldiers of the First World War came from a deep empathy with the many men who were dying. Owen fought alongside them and wanted to tell of what he called the 'pity' of war through his poems. It is important to focus on the way in which character is presented. You should consider the use of language and techniques very carefully.

SETTING AND ATMOSPHERE

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

setting the place where something is or where something happens, and the general environment
atmosphere the feeling that an event or place gives you

The **setting** of a text can tell you a lot about the text and helps to create **atmosphere**. If a play is set entirely in one room, it can evoke a tense, claustrophobic feeling. A novel with scenes in open countryside under clear skies could suggest feelings of freedom and opportunity.

▲ What atmosphere do you think might be generated by a setting like this?

KEY POINT

The setting and the atmosphere it evokes are important devices used by a writer in order to influence readers. Careful choice of language is important in conveying this.

CONSIDERING SETTING AND ATMOSPHERE

When approaching a new text, identify the setting and atmosphere more closely by considering the questions below. Does the writer:

- establish the sense of place, weather, time?
- create a particular atmosphere? For example, is it tense or mysterious?
- give details of the setting? How does this link with the atmosphere created?
- choose specific vocabulary to create mood?
  Can you find examples of nouns, adjectives, verbs which do this?
- use images or stage instructions to create effects? Are these linked to a subject or theme?
- link setting and mood to the action or characters' feelings? For example, is a sad scene set in a rainy, windy, open space?

ACTIVITY 5

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ SETTING

Look at the questions in the list above. Answer them in response to one of the prose or drama texts that you are studying.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- read and understand a variety of texts
- select and interpret information, ideas and perspectives
- comment on the language used.

NARRATIVE VOICE

When considering a text it is important to study and discuss techniques and features of narrative, including style, plot, character, theme, viewpoint, tone and mood. A useful place to begin is to consider the 'voice' which is telling the story. Is it written in the first person ('I'), or third person (written from an external perspective separate from the characters)?

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

first person written from the perspective of one person – that is, using 'I'; this differs from the second person, which directly addresses the reader ('you'), and the third person ('he', 'she' and 'it')

third person using the third person – that is, 'he', 'she'and 'it'; this differs from the first person ('I') and the second person, which directly addresses the reader ('you')

narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

DID YOU KNOW?

Second-person narration speaks to directly to the reader, usually referring to them as 'you'. This technique is not used very often but can make the reader feel part of the story as it invites involvement or agreement with the narrator.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS

▼ FIRST- AND THIRD- PERSON NARRATION

Whether a text is narrated in the first person or in the third person can have an impact on how a reader feels about the text. For example, a first-person narrative is more personal and a third-person narrative is more detached. Draw up a list of other differences between them.

CONSIDERING NARRATIVE VOICE

When thinking about narrative voice, consider these questions.

- Does the writer tell the story from a narrator's point of view?
- Does the writer give the reader several different points of view?
- What tone is used? For example, is it urgent, anxious, relaxed, excited?
- Do you get a sense of the narrator as a character? What details of their lives are suggested?
- Are they writing the story about themselves?
- Can you trust the narrator? Are there any clues that you should not believe everything that they say?
- Is a setting and time period established? What kinds of words are used for this?

▲ A wigwam

▼ FROM *THE SALT ROAD* BY JANE JOHNSON

When I was a child, I had a wigwam in our back garden: a circle of thin yellow cotton draped over a bamboo pole and pegged to the lawn. Every time my parents argued, that was where I went. I would lie on my stomach with my fingers in my ears and stare so hard at the red animals printed on its bright decorative border that after a while they began to dance and run, until I wasn't in the garden any more but out on the plains, wearing a fringed deerskin tunic and feathers in my hair, just like the braves in the films I watched every Saturday morning in the cinema down the road.

Even at an early age I found it preferable to be outside in my little tent rather than inside the house. The tent was my space. It was as large as my imagination, which was infinite. But the house, for all its **grandeur** and **Georgian** spaciousness, felt small and suffocating. It was stuffed with things, as well as with my mother and father's bitterness. They were both **archaeologists**, my parents: lovers of the past, they had surrounded themselves with boxes of yellowed papers, ancient artefacts, dusty objects; the fragile, friable husks of lost civilizations. I never understood why they decided to have me: even the quietest baby, the most house-trained toddler, the most studious child, would have disrupted the artificial, museum-like calm they had wrapped around themselves. In that house they lived separated from the rest of the world, in a bubble in which dust motes floated silently like the fake snow in a snow-globe. I was not the child to complement such a life, being a wild little creature, loud and messy and **unbiddable**. I liked to play rough games with the boys instead of engaging in the sedate, codified exchanges of the other girls. I had dolls, but more often than not I beheaded or scalped them, or buried them in the garden and forgot where they were. I had no interest in making fashionable outfits for the **oddly attenuated** pink plastic **mannequins** with their insectile torsos and brassy hair that the other girls so worshipped and adorned.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

grandeur	grandness
Georgian	British style of architecture from the period 1714–1811
archaeologists	scientists who study the past by looking at historical objects and sites
unbiddable	will not be told what to do
oddly attenuated	strangely long and thin
mannequins	models or dummies

KEY POINT

The narrative voice in a text is another key part of a text. The tone can help set the mood and atmosphere and the choice of first- or third-person narration can help shape how events are reported.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING

▼ ANALYSING A NARRATIVE VOICE

Read the extract from *The Salt Road* by Jane Johnson. Highlight any information that the reader is given about the narrator in the passage. Then construct a P-E-E paragraph to answer the following question.

▶ **What sense of the narrator's home life is suggested in this passage?**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand how writers organise their work for effect.

STRUCTURE

Writers often use a variety of interesting structural devices to arrange their prose, plays or poems. You need to be able to write about how texts are structured, considering how structure contributes to your understanding and interpretation of the text.

HINT

When analysing the structure of a text as a whole, consider the following questions.

- Is the structure linear or does it involve time-shifts?
- What narrative links are used to suggest a movement in time?
- Is there a contrast in the tone and mood between two parts of a text when time moves?
- How much is revealed about the characters at any one time? What do you learn about the characters when time moves?

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrative	the story or plot
time-shift	moving between different periods of time

ANALYSING STRUCTURE

The simplest way to tell a story is in linear fashion, starting at the beginning and going on until you reach the end. When commenting on the structure of narrative, consider the following questions.

BEGINNINGS

- **Is a setting/time period established?** What kinds of words are used for this?
- **Is a character (or characters) introduced?**
- **Is a theme suggested?** What effect does this have on the reader?
- **Is there a narrator?** Do they speak in a chorus or commentary (first or third person)? What is their tone of voice like? For example, is it urgent, anxious, relaxed, excited… ?
- **Is dialogue used?** What effect does it have on the reader? For example, is it entertaining, tense, fast-moving, thoughtful?
- **Is there a prevailing tense (past or present)?** What effect does this have?

MIDDLES

- **Is a problem introduced?** How?
- **Are all the characters behaving in the same way?** Which ones have changed?
- **Has the setting changed?** How does it fit in with the plot? Does it give added interest?
- **Are there clear links with earlier parts of the story/play?** What are they? Are they shown through words or actions?
- **Does the writer suggest what is to come?** How?

ENDINGS

- **Does the story/play come to a definite end?** Does the writer leave the reader to guess what happens?
- **Does the book end as you expected?** Or is it a surprise, or even shock, ending?
- **Does the end echo the opening?** Does it return to the same theme, setting, characters, for example?
- **Is there a moral/message?** Have the characters learned a lesson? Does the author want to tell the reader something?

DID YOU KNOW?

Some writers create interesting effects by handling time in a more fluid way and not relying on a simple beginning-middle-end structure. By using the technique of time-shift, also known as **prolepsis**, narrative can work in a non-linear way. This allows the reader to make connections between widely separated events. **Flashbacks** to the past can change the reader's interpretation of events and shifts forward can give you a glimpse of the future of the narrative.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

prolepsis suggestions of things that will happen, before they do

flashbacks when the narrator of a story jumps out of the present in order to describe an event which happened in the past; often flashbacks are in the form of the memories of characters in the present

KEY POINT

How a text is structured can influence your understanding of a text and your reaction to it. How and when information is revealed is important to both the plot and character development.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ADAPTIVE LEARNING, CREATIVITY, TEAMWORK

▼ CONSTRUCTING A NARRATIVE

Working in pairs, cut up the first part of any story into short phrases, place them in an envelope and swap them with another group.

Arrange the contents of your envelope into whatever order makes the most sense. Discuss this with your partner and explain your thinking. Try rearranging the story using different structures to produce different effects.

▼ FROM *MRS DALLOWAY* BY VIRGINIA WOOLF

Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumplemayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning – fresh as if issued to children on a beach.

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when, with a squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, whe had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and – was that it? – "I prefer men to cauliflowers" – was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace – Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; it was his sayings one remembered; his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when millions of things had utterly vanished – how strange it was! – a few sayings like this about cabbages.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ ANALYSING STRUCTURE

Mrs Dalloway is a novel with an unusual structure. The technique used in which the thoughts and feelings that are running through the mind of a character are described is known as stream of consciousness. You can see from this piece how structure and narrative voice are linked.

Read the opening of the novel and answer the following questions.

- **What is this passage about?**
- **How does the author show you what Mrs Dalloway is thinking?**
- **How do you feel about Mrs Dalloway at the end of the passage? Why?**

APIENTIA DIRECTRICE PRO

WRITING SKILLS

Assessment Objective 1

Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement

Assessment Objective 2

Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects

Assessment Objective 3

Explore links and connections between texts

Assessment Objective 4

Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

This chapter focuses on some core writing skills that you can apply to all parts of the English Literature course. Working through these lessons and activities will help you develop the writing skills you will need for the exams and coursework assignments.

The chapter is split into the following sections:

- Vocabulary
- Sentences
- Structure
- Punctuation and spelling.

Throughout this course you will need to be able to meet the Assessment Objectives AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- appreciate a writer's choice of words
- develop your own choice of words.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT VOCABULARY

Your words need to attract the attention of a reader and keep them engaged so that they will continue to read what you have written. Choosing the correct vocabulary is central to achieving this.

Words that engage the senses are particularly effective for this purpose. Look at these opening sentences.

- It exploded in her face. **(sight)**
- Something was scratching under the door. **(sound)**
- From the kitchen came a reminder of the garlic that she loved. **(smell)**
- He pulled a face as if he had swallowed sour milk. **(taste)**
- The breeze ran along his skin. **(touch)**

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CREATIVITY

▼ ENGAGING THE SENSES

Work with a partner and write two opening sentences using each of the senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.

PRECISION

When you speak, the person who is listening can ask you to explain yourself if anything you say is not clear. When you write, your reader will probably not be able to ask for an explanation so you have to get things right first time.

There are times when you need to be precise in your choice of words. Compare these two sentences:

> Some sort of animal could be seen approaching along the side of the road.
>
> A cat could be seen walking cautiously along the gutter.

▶ **Which of the two sentences is clearer and more precise? Which words and phrases bring about this effect?**

Next, compare these two sentences:

> Here at summer camp you will be under the supervision of a residential nurse and a medical practitioner who is available at any time.
>
> Welcome to summer camp where we hope you will enjoy being cared for.

Both sentences could be met at the start of a stay at a summer camp. However, one immediately informs you of the medical precautions that have been taken and this suggests that there might well be a need for medical supervision. The second sentence simply provides a more appropriate welcome that is warmer and expresses a hope that things go well.

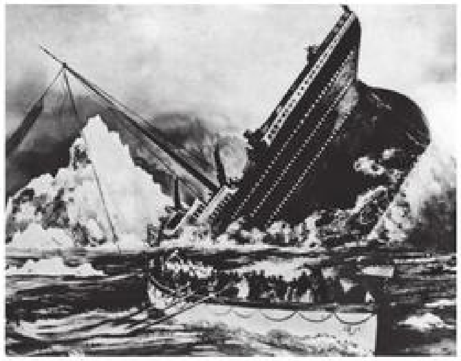
Finally, compare these two sentences:

> Put dirty cutlery into the basket on the left and leave dirty crockery next to the sink on the right, taking care to see that no uneaten food is dropped carelessly onto the floor.
>
> Please leave your dirty cutlery and crockery in the places indicated; your keeping this area clean and tidy will help our staff who will appreciate your cooperation. Thank you.

The first sentence simply instructs you what to do and anticipates carelessness on your part. The second contains three very important words, 'please' and 'thank you'; this shows the writer addressing the reader with respect and consideration by showing why the reader's taking care will be appreciated by other people.

▶ **Which of the two sentences here will encourage better cooperation?**

These examples show the impact that individual words can have and their significance in how a sentence is read.



▲ The sinking of *RMS Titanic*

KEY POINT

The bigger your vocabulary, the more words you have to choose from and the easier it is to express yourself well. The best way to improve your vocabulary is by reading and taking an interest in the words other people use.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

stern rear of a boat
steerage the lower decks where the cheapest accommodation was provided

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ PRECISION IN ACTION

This extract is from an account of the sinking of the *Titanic*. The sinking of this supposedly unsinkable ship caused widespread shock in 1912. Read the extract carefully, noticing the choice of language. Then copy and complete the table, selecting key words and phrases the writer uses to convey what she can see.

> In a couple of hours, though, she began to go down more rapidly. Then the fearful sight began. The people in the ship were just beginning to realise how great their danger was. When the forward part of the ship dropped suddenly at a faster rate, so that the upward slope became marked, there was a sudden rush of passengers on all the decks towards the **stern**. It was like a wave. We could see the great black mass of people in the **steerage** sweeping to the rear part of the boat and breaking through into the upper decks. At the distance of about a mile we could distinguish everything through the night, which was perfectly clear. We could make out the increasing excitement on board the boat as the people, rushing to and fro, caused the deck lights to disappear and reappear as they passed in front of them.

▼ KEY WORD OR PHRASE	▼ WHAT IT CONVEYS
Fearful	This word conveys the pitiful state of the panicking passengers who were still on the boat.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- consider the effect of words and phrases
- demonstrate an ability to use words and phrases to good effect.

VOCABULARY FOR EFFECT

The words you use come from the vocabulary that you know and can use confidently and comfortably. Some words – *the*, *some*, *is*, *what*, for example – do not have the effect of other words such as *revolting*, *splendid*, *monster* and *eliminate*. Here you are going to look at the way writers choose words.

CONNOTATIONS

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

referend the thing or idea to which a word refers

connotations ideas linked to a word; ideas that have become associated with a word

There is more to a word than its **referend**. The word ‘grease’ denotes or refers to an oily material often used to lubricate machinery or carry medication. Sometimes the word is used to indicate distaste or revulsion. Then the word’s **connotations**, such as ‘nauseous’, ‘slimy’ and ‘sticky’, come into play.

Some words have positive or negative connotations. In this sentence, whatever she had done, it was approved of or appreciated as something positive.

> They talked all morning about her *success*.

However, in this sentence, the subject now wishes that she had not done something, something seen now in a negative light.

> Now she was left only with her *regrets*.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION. TEAMWORK, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

▼ CONNOTATIONS AND WORD CHOICE

1 Work in small groups and discuss the effect of these words and phrases.

traitor
cruel
desperate
magic
cool
adorable
on the brink
totally helpless
readily available
awesome

▶

2 Use each of the words and phrases in question 1 in complete sentences.

3 Read the following extract and choose words and phrases that have a particular effect. Copy and complete the table, adding your ideas. Try to find at least another six examples.

▲ Certain phrases can have powerful effects.

> Once upon a time it was said that three trolls lived in a forest. Local people lived in fear of them and avoided at night the twisting path that wound its way between the trees. From time to time late-night travellers would find themselves lost in the forest, alone and bewildered, and they would imagine the sound of a foot snapping a twig or catch in the corner of their eye something moving in the shadows.
>
> These close encounters with the trolls were reported widely and fed the imaginations of the locals. None of them realised that nobody had ever been harmed in any way by these trolls, but that did not restrain those people who really enjoyed terrifying their fellow citizens with outrageous tales of a death that could so easily catch up with them in the woods around the town.
>
> The truth of the matter was that the three trolls were very shy. However, they craved the company of other beings and would approach them warily in the forest and then, before they could introduce themselves their nerves would fail and they would scuttle back into the undergrowth, safely out of sight.

▼ QUOTE	▼ WHAT EFFECT IT HAS
Once upon a time…	This expression is frequently used to start fairy tales and so its use here alerts the reader to the possibility that this story follows key features of the genre.
Bewildered	This word creates a strong sense of uncertainty.

SYNONYMS

A synonym is a word with the same meaning as another word in the same language. They can be used to echo or widen your understanding of a word or to reinforce an idea and create imagery.

> The young tree, *the sapling*, was the place chosen by the blackbird to build its nest.

Here the word 'sapling' provides a synonym for the tree. It helps to develop the referend (tree) by supplying more detail and further connotations.

KEY POINT

In this section you have seen how words used thoughtfully enable the writer to achieve more. Powerful results are possible when words are effectively chosen.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- appreciate how language can be used to bring about a wide variety of effects.

LANGUAGE FOR DIFFERENT EFFECTS

As you read you become aware of the different ways in which language is used and often form preferences. When you read for a particular purpose, you quickly learn to recognise the sort of material for which you are looking. From this it follows that when you write something you should aim to make clear the purpose of your writing and the effect you want to achieve. It also helps to have examined and understood how other writers achieve different effects.

▲ Libraries contain a wide range of writing.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS PROBLEM SOLVING, ANALYSIS

▼ TYPES OF WRITING

Visit the school library and look for examples of written material that is informative, transactional, emotive, persuasive, discursive, entertaining, inspirational, descriptive, ironic and advisory.

Record the source for each type and be aware that one source may include more than one of these types. If necessary, a librarian should be able to help.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

transactional part of a dialogue or a conversation, often used in texting

ironic using words to convey a meaning that is completely opposite to their apparent meaning

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ WRITER'S INTENTION

Read the extract and consider what effects the writer is trying to achieve. Look at some of the words used that indicate the writer's intentions. See if you can find and explain other ways in which the language is used here to achieve important effects.

> I expect that you will have often heard warnings about the dangers to your health of smoking. One of my teachers once described handling the lungs of a victim of lung cancer; they resembled, he said, an old leather rugby ball[1] and they sat in his hands, hard and rough like a large lump of coal[2]. Giving advice to young people is often difficult for parents and teachers[3]; it's part of growing up, to put aside advice and warnings from the older generation[4] and to trust your own judgement. One of the difficulties for young people, however, is "peer pressure," the need to fit in with our contemporaries, to meet their approval at least and, better still sometimes, to impress them. Daring to smoke, especially when it is forbidden, is part of this and it is probably as important for some young people as any pleasure to be gained from supposedly enjoying[5] a cigarette while watching nervously in case a teacher appears[6].

[1] Warning: this is what can happen to smokers.
[2] Description: shows the effects of smoking, to strengthen the warning.
[3] Information: plainly stated and aimed at readers who have yet to be parents or teachers.
[4] Explanation: rejecting adult advice is sometimes just a part of growing up.
[5] Ironic: suggests that the person is not really enjoying the cigarette when the purpose of smoking is supposedly to enjoy it.
[6] Description: shows the fear of a young person trying to show how grown-up he or she is.

Look at this sentence.

> Now stop.

Which of the two words in this sentence is emphasised? What is the effect of this?

If you change the order of the words something changes.

Stop now.

Instead of emphasising the action that is to be carried out, to stop, the emphasis is now on the timing of that action – it must be now, immediately.

The ordering of words in a sentence is important, particularly at the end of a sentence, before a pause. There is a brief moment before you hear the next word while the sound of the last word continues just for a fraction longer. Such a word is emphasised and brought more readily to your attention.

Look at the first sentence of the extract in Activity 2 in comparison with the re-ordered version that follows. Consider the difference that re-ordering the words makes. Which ending do you think is the more effective? Why?

> I expect that you will have often heard warnings about the dangers to your health of smoking.

> I expect that you will have often heard warnings about the dangers of smoking to your health.

It may help you to analyse the phrases further by breaking them down into two smaller phrases.

- about the dangers to your health / of smoking
- about the dangers of smoking / to your health

There are three key words: ‘dangers’, ‘health’ and ‘smoking’. Which of these should be most closely connected? Perhaps it would help to put the three words together like this: *Smoking endangers health*. Can you see now why smoking was left at the end of the original sentence?

KEY POINT

Your choice of words and phrases, and the way you arrange and adapt them, are crucial if you want to communicate effectively.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

rhetorical question a question that you ask as a way of making a statement, without expecting an answer
contrast a literary device where two objects, people or ideas are placed next to each other to highlight their differences
repetition saying the same thing more than once to highlight its importance
direct address using second person pronoun ‘you’ or ‘your’
rule of three grouping things together in threes to aid memory and add impact
hyperbole exaggerating for effect
alliteration the use of several words together that begin with the same sound or letter
simile similar to a metaphor, a description that says that an object is *like* an image rather than that *it is* the image
personification when something which is not human is made to sound human by attributing human qualities to it

ACTIVITY 3

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ EFFECTS OF LITERARY DEVICES

Look at the following literary devices. Can you think of an example of each? What effect do they have?

Rhetorical question
Contrast
Repetition
Direct address
Rule of three
Hyperbole
Alliteration
Simile
Personification

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand the ways in which sentences can be assembled
- see the way that the meaning of a sentence is made effective.

SENTENCE TYPES

As you start to examine sentences it is important to remember what makes a sentence. A sentence is the most basic part of the written language and properly constructed sentences help you to communicate effectively, whatever your purpose.

A sentence is built around finite verbs, or action words, which indicate whether the action takes place in the past, present or future and which have some indication of the agent, the person or thing that carries out the action.

BUILDING SENTENCES

▲ What is the main verb?

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

clause a group of words built around a finite verb

You can start by thinking about sentences in a mechanical way. Here is a simple sentence. It has one verb, a main verb, *took*.

> They took their sunglasses.

To this you can add something more.

> They took their sunglasses and (they) enjoyed themselves.

The original sentence has become a compound sentence. Two simple sentences have become joined by a conjunction: *and*. They have become two coordinate clauses in a compound sentence. Each coordinate clause has a main verb, in this case, *took* and *enjoyed*.

You can develop the sentence further.

> They took their sunglasses and enjoyed themselves although it was raining.

To the compound sentence, with its two main verbs, you have added a subordinate clause: *although it was raining*. This clause also contains a verb, *was raining*. However, alone, the clause, *although it was raining*, makes incomplete sense. Without a main clause you do not know what happened while it was raining.

This clause has to be joined to the main sentence with a subordinating conjunction, *although*. The sentence is now a complex sentence with two main verbs and a subordinate verb.

> They took their sunglasses and enjoyed themselves although it was raining.

You could link two of the components in other ways to form complex sentences.

> They took their sunglasses although it was raining.
> Although it was raining they took their sunglasses.

Each sentence here has a main clause and a subordinate clause.

Finally, look at another sentence.

> He looked at the menu which was badly written.

A simple sentence, *He looked at the menu*, has become a main clause to which a relative clause, *which was badly written* has been added. This relative clause has been linked with a relative conjunction, *which*, to form another complex sentence.

WHY EXAMINE SENTENCES LIKE THIS?

The purpose of examining sentences like this is to show you how you can build up ideas and communicate them effectively. By using subordinate, coordinate and relative clauses you can add information, without interrupting the flow of words, and still indicate the most important aspects of what you are saying.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ IDENTIFYING FINITE VERBS

Identify the finite verbs in these sentences and decide what kind of sentence it is.

1 We should try to smile and try to laugh.
2 The program, which she had spent weeks developing, crashed.
3 Whenever they can all cows eat grass because grass is good for them.

MINOR SENTENCES

You will sometimes find groups of words punctuated as if they were ordinary sentences when they are not.

> *Good*. (A reaction to something)
>
> *Over here!* (A demonstration, some information)
>
> *The boyfriend I ditched last week*. (An answer to a question)

In speech, such minor sentences are much more common and the listener can usually ask for clarification if required. When you write it is better only to use minor sentences in direct or quoted speech to show what is actually said.

KEY POINT

Words and phrases can be built up into different types of sentences. By varying the sentences you use, you help the reader to stay engaged and strengthen the effect of what you write.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- find your opening words.

OPENING SENTENCES

Choosing the very first thing that you want to write or say can sometimes make it difficult to start. However, once you have taken that first step, you can continue more easily.

Opening sentences are very important as they set the tone for the reader. They are mainly used to introduce but can also be used to explain, attract attention or pose questions.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING

▼ OPENING SENTENCE STYLE

Here are some opening sentences. Where would you expect to find them? In a novel, a newspaper, a text book or a television broadcast? Explain your choice.

1 It was a man in front of them, a man with a gun.
2 The note informed him that, before being dispatched, the contents of the package had been carefully checked and he smiled.
3 Hot pools can be found in Rotorua, on New Zealand's North Island, evidence of volcanic activity.
4 The views here are fantastic; we can see from the car park a long gentle slope down to a beach where Pacific rollers crash and spread themselves across the sand.
5 Once upon a time there was a wild goat who lived in the forest.
6 And European ministers gathered today in Brussels to update their latest agreement.
7 In order to escape they would have to cut through the wire and continue to listen for the drones that would be sent to follow them.

Work in groups and match each of the opening sentences to the explanations that follow.

i A newspaper article or an introduction to an item broadcast on radio or television. It's about an event that has already taken place, but is being reported very soon afterwards. The main point is conveyed early in the sentence to encourage people to continue to pay attention.
ii Some information has already reached him but he seems not to be taking it very seriously. Our interest in the character is encouraged as we see his reaction to something.
iii Travel writing. We are stopped by the drama of the opening which is followed by a description of a geographical feature.
iv The immediate purpose of the characters is the first thing we are told, and it is dramatic and involves risk.

KEY POINT

To start a piece of writing you can:
- use particular words or phrases
- present something that is obviously new
- refer to something that has already been mentioned before saying something new about it.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, COMMUNICATION

▼ KEY WORDS

Work in groups and copy and complete the table below. Look again at the sentences in Activity 1 and consider the most essential words in each opening sentence and what effects they create.

▼ ESSENTIAL WORDS	▼ THE EFFECTS THEY CREATE
1 in front, man, gun	There is drama because the writer is confronted by an armed man. They are specific in terms of detail.

After completing the table, work on your own or with a partner. Write another introductory sentence to match each of the explanations in Activity 1. Swap your opening sentences with a partner or with another pair. Write a sentence of your own to follow the introductory sentence that has been passed to you.

▲ How would you describe this scene in an opening sentence?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand the ways that sentences achieve their effects
- understand the ways in which a sentence is constructed around its main points.

SENTENCES FOR EFFECTS

You have already seen the mechanical ways in which sentences can be built up. Now look at the ways in which sentences achieve their effects.

ANALYSING SENTENCES

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

periodic sentence a sentence that is not complete until the final word or clause

Here's a sentence from a book for young children.

> The cat sat on the mat.

To see how this sentence achieves its effect, consider the point of the sentence. What is it about? It's about the cat sitting on the mat. That is all you are told. This a **periodic sentence**, a few simple words followed by a 'full stop' (.) or, as it is called in American English, a period.

You can extend this sentence.

> The cat sat on the mat and smiled.

This time the sentence is more subtle: what main point or points is the writer making? You are told two main points.

A compound sentence is a sentence with more than one subject.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS, ADAPTIVE LEARNING, TEAMWORK

▼ PERIODIC SENTENCES

Write a few periodic sentences on individual slips of paper. Then work as a group and see how many compound sentences you can form by joining the slips in pairs. You will probably need a few additional words.

Now look at a final development of the sentence.

> With a huge grin on her face the cat sat on the mat while from next door there came the sound of a dog digging its way under the fence.

What is the main point? *The cat sat on the mat*. All the other information is of lesser importance and the main point is inserted among this additional information. This is a 'loose sentence'.

Each person in the group now writes one short periodic sentence. Pass your sentence to another member of the group who should add further information in order to make a compound sentence. This should then be passed onto the next member of the group to be turned into a loose sentence.

▲ Is this the main point of the sentence?

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, CREATIVITY, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

▼ CONSTRUCTING VARIED SENTENCES

Work on your own and write three sentences as follows.

1 A periodic sentence including one of the following:

- an important piece of information
- a description of something that you find attractive
- something in which you believe very strongly.

2 A compound sentence developing the idea from your first sentence in two main points.

3 A loose sentence developing your idea further.

In groups or as a class, listen to each other's sentences read aloud and see how quickly you can identify the points they are making.

MOVING ON

Look at two aspects of these examples: their length and their ordering.

> It was late. He had left home early, caught the early bus, but the accident on the main road meant he was alone now, after dark, in an area that he did not know.

A short opening sentence establishes the time in a dramatic fashion and the following sentence builds up to the next dramatic revelation, that the character is alone. It is then that more drama is revealed: the darkness and his lack of familiarity with the area.

> These instructions should be followed carefully. Operatives who fail to do this will be dealt with severely.

Here a simple sentence conveys information coupled with a warning at the end where it is more noticeable, more emphatic. The warning tone is maintained in the second sentence with its final warning that severe treatment is in prospect for operatives who fail to heed the instructions.

> What would you do? You come home to find your house broken open, your goods stolen, and all the plumbing smashed. Then the sergeant down at the police station asks you to stay calm. Keep calm?

Confronted with a disaster, someone asks why they should be expected to stay calm. A short question holds the reader ready to respond. *You* introduces the second sentence, an attempt to lead the reader into imagining the writer's feelings and aspects of the disaster are listed to build the force of the description. In the next sentence, the tension is eased as the reader is told of the police sergeant's reaction, ready to hear the anger of the final sentence, a simple question that is all the more direct and challenging in its brevity.

KEY POINT

In a periodic sentence the main point is found at the end, in a compound sentence there is more than one point and in a loose sentence the main point is not at the end. You can use this variety of sentence types to help convey effectively the things you wish to say in writing.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- appreciate how you can structure or organise your writing effectively, whether you are providing information, describing something, discussing something or providing entertainment.

PRINCIPLES OF STRUCTURE

When a piece of writing is judged, or marked by examiners, the purpose of the writing is considered, alongside the accuracy and clarity of the writing and with an overall sense of the writing's effectiveness.

Here you are going to consider the way that sentences and paragraphs are organised so that the structure of your writing is enhanced and made more effective.

UNDERSTANDING THE PRINCIPLES OF STRUCTURE

Read the following sentence.

> Charlie, look out!

There is an urgent call to one person here: Charlie. The most important word is placed at the start of the sentence. However, now look at the following sentence.

> After school I need to speak to you, Charlie.

Here a teacher is making an announcement and wants all the class to listen until the name of the student concerned is revealed at the end of the sentence. Charlie is the subject of each sentence; it is what the sentence is about.

If you ask what a sentence is about, you can identify its subject. The subject of each of the following sentences is in bold.

1. **The ice cream** was hidden in the freezer.
2. Hidden in the freezer was **the ice cream**.
3. **The ice cream**, which her brother had hidden in the freezer, was discovered.
4. Hidden in the freezer, which had been turned off, was **the ice cream**.

Those parts of the sentence that are not the subject are called the predicate. The predicate can be discovered by asking the question, 'What have I been told about the subject of the sentence?'

Apply this question to the four sentences above.

▲ Identifying the subject is key to understanding structure.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ PURPOSE AND PROGRESSION IN SENTENCES

Work in pairs and identify the key words and ideas in each of the following sentences. Ask what seem to be the key ideas that link one sentence to another. Then look at the beginnings, middles and endings of these sentences.

> The ice cream was hidden in the freezer. Then the bananas were discovered in the bathroom and the marshmallows tucked away in Sophie's bedroom. Now there would have to be an enquiry.

Now identify the important step in each sentence of this mini-narrative.

STAGES IN A PIECE OF WRITING

The principle of steps in writing applies in any piece of writing. Whether it's a brief email, a set of instructions for a piece of machinery, a text book or a novel, it will require an introduction, a middle section and an ending.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING

▼ BREAKING DOWN STORIES

Work with a partner and identify any story that you think your classmates will know. It could be a television drama, a film you have watched, a story that you have read or a story that was read to you. Describe the three stages of the story, the introduction, the middle section and the ending, in three sentences.

Before you start, here is an example of three sentences that outline a well-known story (*The Cruel Sea* by Nicholas Montsarrat) in the same way.

> We meet Ericson the captain of both the boats involved in the story, in a naval dockyard where the first of his two commands is still in the hands of the builders. Ericson's career, as captain of a warship that is sunk, and of another warship that survives the war, leads us through five years of naval warfare in what came to be known as *The Battle of the Atlantic*. At the end of this battle, Ericson finds himself in charge of captured submarines which are now incapable of threatening allied shipping any more.

KEY POINT

You have looked at how sentences can have an introduction, a middle section and an ending. The same is true of a more substantial piece of writing, such as a book.

▶ Naval warfare

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- use paragraphs effectively.

PARAGRAPHING FOR EFFECT

There are no mechanical rules about the size or length of sentences or paragraphs, nor about the number of lines or words needed. The important idea to grasp here is practical: how can you best organise sentences and paragraphs so they are as clear as possible?

You have already looked at ideas that link sentences. Now, when you start a new paragraph you have to do two things: firstly, maintain contact with what you have already written and, secondly, develop ideas, sometimes with new material, new ideas and new directions.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ DEVELOPING NARRATIVES

Work with a partner or in groups and read the passage below. Follow these items from the first paragraph into the second paragraph: the tea, the woman and the newspaper. How is each developed?

> The woman offered him another cup of tea. She had been very friendly since he had stepped into the house. The room seemed all right and now there was another cup of tea. There was something slightly odd about the taste, not enough to worry him and, anyway, he wanted to find out what the rent would be. While she waited for his answer she glanced down at the newspaper and folded it away, hastily, out of sight, behind one of the cushions.
>
> There was a knock at the front door. The woman got up and went into the hall to see who it was and he could hear a conversation get under way. From behind the cushion he retrieved the newspaper and read the headline: *Missing students – poisoner suspected*. He took another sip of his tea. This time he screwed up his face and put down the cup. From one side he picked up his coat and stood up.

- ▶ **What is new in the second paragraph?**
- ▶ **What changes about the young man in the second paragraph?**

There is a balance in these two paragraphs. You learn why the young man has come to the house and that information needs no further development. The hints about the tea in the first paragraph prepare you for the dramatic newspaper headline revealed in the second paragraph.

▲ Paragraphs can be used for setting scenes or developing ideas.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS

▼ KEY CONTENT IN PARAGRAPHS

Work with a partner or on your own and identify the key words or ideas in each of the following two paragraphs. Copy and complete the table, commenting on the links between these words and ideas.

> At the foot of the hill there is a large spread of woodland, pine trees – dark green, that swarm upwards, almost to the top of the hill. Local people love this place, to which they bring their dogs and their children; on most days, providing the weather is reasonable, you will see them dotted about on the parkland, clearly in no hurry, clearly enjoying this special space.
>
> Now the county council has announced plans to extend the city ring-road to accommodate industrial traffic to the new factory sites as well as the growing rush-hour traffic associated with the expansion of the university. Councillors are divided about the threats to local people's leisure and the need to move traffic quickly around the city. Protests are planned for next week and locals hope that the council will be sufficiently embarrassed and will re-think the transport committee's recommendations.

▼ KEY WORDS AND IDEAS	▼ LINKS
Woodland/ring-road	Different types of location introducing each paragraph, contrasting what exists and what is proposed.

ACTIVITY 3

SKILLS CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ DEVELOPING IDEAS

Work with a partner and develop the ideas that follow into sentences and paragraphs for a report in a newspaper. Remember to arrange the ideas in an order that suits the effect you want your report to have. Do you want to alert your readers, warn them or reassure them? Or something else completely?

> A burst water main, a busy road junction, freezing weather conditions, accidents and a busy hospital...

KEY POINT

As you move from one paragraph to another you should indicate clearly that you are either developing an idea or introducing a new one.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- organise the flow of ideas to maximise their effect.

LINKING IDEAS

Good writing flows and is easy to read. Here you will see how a writer can organise the flow of ideas to maximise their effect.

UNDERSTANDING HOW IDEAS LINK TOGETHER

▲ An airship

Read this article about Nevil Shute, a British author in the 20th century. His best-known novel was *A Town Like Alice*.

> Not many people[1] who enjoyed Shute's novels realised that he had started out as an engineer in the early days of aero-engineering after the First World War, not with aeroplanes, but with airships[2]. It was while he was working as an engineer that he began to write[3].
>
> Although well-qualified[4], with an engineering degree from Oxford University, Shute, whose full name was Nevil Shute Norway was a practical man[5], interested in the ways that people from different backgrounds could get along well. In *A Town like Alice*, a brief encounter during the Second World War between a brash Australian prisoner of war and an English girl who had also been taken prisoner by the Japanese, developed into a romance as the Australian travels to England after the war to find the woman he had known as Mrs Bong[6].
>
> It is in his non-fiction[7], his auto-biography, *Slide Rule*, that we learn how to build an air-ship and he describes the ladder-way inside the craft[8] that enables engineers to climb out onto the top of the balloon while it is flying to sit and chat[9]. While the engineers hold on to a safety rope, passengers in the cabin slung below the balloon travel in comparative safety[10]. Shute also wrote authoritatively about the economics of air-ship construction and the politics that drove a government-controlled industry to compete with a private one[11].
>
> In this book we also learn of[12] his terrible sadness in his early teens when his older brother was killed in the trenches of the First World War, as a result of the enemy's tunnelling under the British trenches and packing the space with high explosive[13]. Shute watched as his brother, Fred, took two weeks to die in hospital in France; Shute's parents, unlike most people, were in a position to drive across France to visit their dying son. When Shute eventually wrote about this he was forty and still missing his brother terribly[14].

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING

▼ IDEA PROGRESSION

Read through the passage about Nevil Shute. Then look at each of the numbered sections, along with the table which shows how each of these sections moves the reader along through the ideas conveyed.

Try to see how the flow is maintained. For example, the first point concerns the movement from the idea of Shute as a well-known novelist to the less well-known fact that he began his professional life as an aeronautical engineer. The next direction of the flow of this passage is provided by the information that he worked, not with aeroplanes, which is what you would expect of aeronautical engineers, but with airships.

It might help you to see your reading of the passage as a series of steps that lead you from one idea to the next, so that you follow the writer and understand what it is that they want to say.

[1] Engaging the reader	Contrast novelist/engineer, surprising information
[2] Contrast – unexpected	'not with' / 'airships' rather than 'aeroplanes'
[3] Moving along	From engineering to writing
[4] Anticipation	'Although well-qualified…'
[5] Comparisons	Educated but practical, engineering and people
[6] Adding detail	Summary of a novel
[7] Adding ideas	Non-fiction as well as fiction
[8] Explanation	Intriguing detail
[9] Illustration	Engaging the imagination
[10] Contrast	Passengers at ease, 'a safety rope'
[11] Adding information	Expanding a point: economics and politics covered
[12] Adding information	'We also learn': preparing for a new topic
[13] Explanation	Details to help the reader understand this topic
[14] Final comment	Distanced: 'eventually'

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, CREATIVITY

▼ LINKING KEY POINTS AND IDEAS

In a novel or short story that you have read find a piece of between two and three pages that you like. It could be the opening, the ending or something elsewhere. Mark or identify each of the main points as they are introduced and make a list of them. Re-order the list if you think the flow of writing could be improved then re-write the piece in your own words, taking care to link your points.

KEY POINT

Writing that flows helps the reader to enjoy and follow a piece of writing. Look at the second sentence of the piece about Shute that refers first to engineering, which has already been established, but also to his writing, a theme that is taken up in the next paragraph.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- control sentences accurately so that what is written can be read easily and clearly understood.

ENDING A SENTENCE

The way in which a sentence finishes can have a dramatic impact on its purpose and content.

Read this passage aloud.

> there are three ways of ending a sentence this is very important if you do not punctuate sentences accurately they are very difficult to read then the meaning will not be clear do you understand this it is extremely important

Now read this passage aloud.

> There are three ways of ending a sentence. This is very important.
> If you do not punctuate sentences accurately they are very difficult to read. Then the meaning will not be clear. Do you understand this?
> It is extremely important!

Three ways of signalling the end of the sentences have been used. Unless you use a question mark for a question or an exclamation mark to stress something important or dramatic, you should use a full stop.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ CHOOSING CLOSING PUNCTUATION

Work on your own and punctuate the following passage. If you cannot read the passage aloud try to imagine the sound of your voice as you read it. Remember, each sentence must have at least one main verb.

> it was night over the hill they could see the stars they had been told of the dangers of the area but they had decided to continue anyway soon they reached the first of the houses where the street took a sharp turn to the right soon they would be back home

KEY POINT

Punctuate the ends of sentences clearly so that they are easily read and easily understood.

Questions must be finished with a question mark. They are formed in two ways. They may be formed with auxiliary verbs such as *would, should, do, does*, and so on. For example, *Should we leave?* or *Does he take sugar?*

Another way of forming questions involves the reversal of the subject/verb order in a statement. For example, *Is it theirs?* This form of question may include question words such as *why, what, where, who, whom* and *how*. For example, *How do you like your coffee?*

Exclamation marks can be used to represent strong emotions, emphasise points or suggest volume. They should be used sparingly so as to not lessen their impact.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand that a comma is used to indicate a pause within a sentence.

COMMAS

Commas can be used in a number of different ways.

Commas do the following:

- indicate a pause, to leave clear a main clause:

  While it was raining, they watched a film.

- separate items in a list:

  For breakfast he ate cereal, toast, baked beans, and two apples.

- clarify meaning by separating ideas:

  His friend who had black hair was found with him. (*It was his friend with black hair who was found with him, not one of his other friends.*)

  His friend, who had black hair, was found with him. (*This friend just happened to have black hair.*)

  - Look at this sentence.

    The River Niger rises in the north of Nigeria, which takes its name from the river, to the north of Lake Oguta, and makes its way southwards towards the delta and out into the Gulf of Guinea.

    The first and second commas separate information about the origin of Nigeria's name and the second and third commas separate further information, about the place where the river rises. These three commas enclose additional information that does not impede the main flow of the sentence. Without this information the main sections of the sentence would still flow together.

    The River Niger rises to the north of Lake Oguta and makes its way southwards towards the delta and out into the Gulf of Guinea.

- open and close direct speech (notice how the actual words that are spoken are enclosed in speech marks, or inverted commas):

  'Come in,' said the doctor, 'do sit down.' The patient made himself comfortable and replied, 'good to see you, doctor.'

  'You know,' said the doctor, 'it's a good job you made this appointment.'

▲ Pauses in speech are often represented by commas in written text.

KEY POINT

It is easy to read quickly from the start to the end of a sentence, as long as commas are used correctly to make clear the writer's intentions.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ USING COMMAS

Insert commas where required in the following passage.

It was raining. Slowly very slowly the puddles filled dull and grey under the dull light. Look out! shouted Henry but it was too late. I told you to look where you were going. You never pay attention ever. Further down the road half a kilometre away an old truck started up misfired once or twice and began a struggle up the hill towards them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand how apostrophes are used.

APOSTROPHES

Apostrophes have two functions. They indicate the omission of one or more letters and, usually with the letter s, they indicate possession, meaning that something belongs to someone or something else. Like other punctuation marks, if they are used correctly, they help to make clear to the reader what the writer intended.

Read both these sentences aloud.

> It's going to be a long night and there's nowhere to go.
>
> It is going to be a long night and there is nowhere to go.

When you read the second sentence you will probably find that you have to make just a little more effort to read *It is* and *there is*. In speech, people usually prefer to omit the *i* in *is*. That means that they suppress the sound or glide over it for the sake of ease and speed. In writing, however, this is often seen as informal in style.

You can do this with other letters and, so long as you use the apostrophe, this will be clear to the reader. Here is another example.

> We haven't a penny between us but she's got plenty.

This time w an *o* and *ha* have been omitted.

When possession is to be indicated, the apostrophe usually appears before the *s* if the subject is singular and afterwards if the subject is plural.

> Helen's mother hid all her brothers' bicycles.

With words that end in *s*, or words that do not take an *s* to show the plural there are two ways to punctuate possession, for example, *Chris' bike the children's clothes*. Alternatively, an additional *s* can be added to names ending with an *s*, for example, *Chris's bike*. However, ensure that you remain consistent by only following one of these rules.

Finally, you have to remember the difference between *Its* and *It's*. When you omit the apostrophe in *its*, it is possessive, whereas *it's* is a contraction of *it is*.

KEY POINT

Clear use of the apostrophe allows quick reading and clear meaning.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ USING APOSTROPHES

Insert the nine apostrophes required here.

> 'Glad youve come,' she said. 'Ive been lookin for you everywhere. I cant imagine whats the matter ere.'
>
> 'Troubles comin soon. Wed best go home.'

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand how to use different punctuation marks.

COLONS, SEMI-COLONS, DASHES, BRACKETS, ELLIPSES

These different types of punctuation have different purposes, but if you use them well they will help to make your writing clear and easy to read.

COLONS

Colons are used to introduce evidence or examples.

> They could see what was stopping the car: a brick wedged under the tyre.

▶ **Write three sentences using a colon like this.**

SEMI-COLONS

Semi-colons are used to join closely related sentences or separate long items in a list.

> It was too late; slowly he raised his hands.
>
> They were all there; Billy who had broken his leg last year; Charlie who had rescued him, although he too had been wounded; and the dog.

▶ **Write two sentences following the first example and two following the second one.**

DASHES

Dashes are used to signal clearly the insertion of non-essential material into a sentence. Their purpose could be to add emphasis, to interrupt or to indicate an abrupt change of thought.

> They were all there – two men and a dog – and she realised that the police would have to be called.

▶ **Write two sentences following the pattern of this example.**

BRACKETS

Brackets are used to add additional material about a preceding item. Unlike dashes, brackets must be used in pairs.

> Kevin (lead singer) and Sharon were the band's best performers.
>
> 'Their guide* who had joined them at the airport helped two of them* to carry their bags.'

▶ **Insert information in brackets about the asterisked words in the sentence that follows.**

ELLIPSES

Ellipses are used where a word is omitted and are made up of three dots (like full stops). They are most useful in direct speech; when people speak they are more likely to pause or break off in mid-sentence.

> He paused. 'I don't think I'm …' With that he turned away.
>
> 'If you don't stop that I'll, I'll …' Before she could finish they had drowned her in laughter.

▶ **Work with a partner and construct two dialogues between two or more characters. Each of you should write the first line of a dialogue, then pass it to your partner who should write the second line. Continue like this until you have written at least ten lines.**

KEY POINT

Remember that each of these punctuation marks has a distinctive function.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- detect items that require correction or that could be improved.

PROOF-READING, CHECKING AND EDITING

There are two important aspects of checking what has been written.

Proof-reading means marking errors in a draft.

Editing means looking for opportunities to modify and improve the material.

PROOF-READING: MECHANICAL ACCURACY

When proof-reading, ask yourself the following questions.

- **Are words spelt and ordered correctly?**
- **Are words changed where necessary so that they work together?**
- **Do the words flow when read out loud? If you are unable to read aloud, try imagining reading aloud instead.**
- **Have you double checked?**

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ FINDING ERRORS

Work on your own or with a partner and correct the highlighted errors in the first sentence below. Then identify and correct the errors in the second sentence.

> There is a hard frost which have been anticipating for some days. Many of the smaler animals had burrow deeply but, fortunately for them, heavy rain then caused the river to bursted it's banks and many of them was drowned.

EDITING

When editing, ask yourself the following questions.

- **Do the ideas flow?**
- **Are they easy to follow?**
- **Could more effective words be chosen?**
- **Could the presentation of ideas be more effective?**

KEY POINT

Language is firstly a spoken matter, something you understand with your hearing even before you learn to read and write. One of the best ways of checking written material is to read it aloud.

When you check something that you have written, you should try to imagine the sound of your voice reading it aloud. Remember that the purpose of writing accurately is to make it easy for someone to read it and understand it with little effort. This is what you should check for when you proof-read and edit a piece of writing, whether it is your own or someone else's.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY

▼ EDITING TEXT

Work on your own and read through the following sentences and edit them, choosing more effective words where you can and re-ordering them where this will improve the passage.

> Across the river he could see the old railway track which had been on the sea-wall. No trains had been seen there for half a century but now a bunch of men who gathered in the Railway Arms, a well-known public house, had decided to campaign for its restoration. One of his neighbours, now in his eighties, remembered the sound of the whistle from the midday train which was his signal to stop work in the fields and go home for lunch.

▲ An old-fashioned steam engine

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- avoid common spelling errors.

COMMON SPELLING ERRORS

It is easy to find lists of commonly misspelt words on the internet. These sites often provide reminders for some spellings and suggest that you make a list of the words that you find difficult to spell.

Correct spelling is something that depends on your visual memory, so reading will help. You should also try to find ways of remembering something about the words, for example, *stationary* and *stationery*.

Where *a* is the final vowel the word means *not moving* or *stopped*. Think of *stopped* as *arrested*, a word which begins with an *a*.

Where *e* is the final vowel the word refers to **e**nvelopes and writing paper.

▲ Stationary or stationery – very different meanings

Another way to help yourself to remember difficult spellings is to look closely at the word, jotted down perhaps on a scrap of paper, and try to memorise it. Then cover up the word while you try to write it down accurately. Repeat this process if necessary. (Here's another difficult word, *necessary*. Remember, *shirts are necessary* – one **c**ollar and two **s**leeves.)

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

mnemonic a device used to aid memory – usually in the form of a saying or rhyme

Words that contain *e* and *i* together are sometimes easier to spell if you remember the following mnemonic:

i *before* e, *except after* c, *unless the sound matches weigh*.

So you have: *yield*, *receive*, *sleigh*. There are exceptions such as *seize*.

Particularly important words that you should make an effort to spell correctly include:

accompany
agreeable
anxious
applaud
certificate
civilised
compliment
complement
conferred
deceitful
decision
disguise
dumb
engineer
exhibition
experiment
fulfil
government
fatigue
height
immediately
language
lightening
lightning
naughty
neighbour
niece
occur
occurred
privilege
prosperous
succession
suspicion
suspicious
temperature
thorough
though
thought
tremendous
vegetable
ventilation

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- start checking your writing automatically.

IMPROVE YOUR WRITING

Spelling, punctuation and grammar must all come together when you write. In practice you have been able to deal with them separately, but when you write you have to cope with all of them at once.

TIPS TO REMEMBER

- Allow your hearing (or the imagined sound of reading) to check grammar and punctuation.
- Allow your sight to check spelling. If you're typing, don't rely on spell checkers.
- When you edit a piece of writing you have to consider the way words are used and put together so that you can correct errors. At the same time, you must consider the ideas that are conveyed and whether they could have been clearer and better organised. Remember that you must do the following.
  - Begin a sentence with a capital letter. A capital letter marks clearly the start of a new sentence. Capital letters must also be used to mark proper nouns and all components of a proper noun, such as Abdul, Singapore and Hong Kong Airport.
  - Stop sentences clearly with a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation mark. Use these punctuation marks in direct speech to mark the end of a spoken sentence.
  - Use commas for pauses and lists, as well as for clarifying information and in direct speech. Here the commas indicate the pauses as you read, to help indicate the words that are actually spoken.

    > Marie uttered the words, 'You fool!' She swallowed hard before continuing. 'What do you think you're doing?' She raised her mobile. 'The police,' she said, 'the police will like this when I send it.'

- When you want to include additional information without interrupting the flow of the sentence you must choose between dashes and brackets.
  - Dashes lead the eye to the next word so that the additional information can be easily taken in as you read on. For example, 'It was light – the sort of morning that calls to early risers – so staying in bed seemed wasteful.'
  - Brackets allow the insertion of shorter, more practical items of information. For example, 'Take out the flour (wholemeal, remember) and weigh out 200 grams.'

KEY POINT

Like any practical activity, writing will improve with practice. Write regularly, at least ten minutes a day, and always check your writing as you go. It's a good idea to check each paragraph as you proceed and that way you will also have a second look at your ideas and an opportunity to consider again how you will lead your ideas into the next paragraph.

KEY POINT

Remember that your aim should always be to write clearly, accurately and effectively. As you write ask yourself: is this clear, is this accurate, will this be effective when someone else reads it?

PAPER 1: POETRY AND MODERN PROSE TEXTS

This chapter focuses on Paper 1: Poetry and Modern Prose Texts of the English Literature course. Working through these lessons and activities will help you develop the reading and writing skills you will need for the Paper 1 exam.

The chapter is split into the following sections:

- Reading poetry
- Poetry Anthology
- Modern prose.

Paper 1 is worth 60% of the total marks for the course and is split into three sections:

- Section A: Unseen poetry
- Section B: Anthology poetry
- Section C: Modern prose.

In sections A and B of your exam you will need to be able to meet Assessment Objectives AO2 and AO3.

In section C of your exam you will need to be able to meet the Assessment Objectives AO1 and AO4.

Assessment Objective 1

Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement

Assessment Objective 2

Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects

Assessment Objective 3

Explore links and connections between texts

Assessment Objective 4

Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

AO1 is worth 13% of marks

AO2 is worth 23% of marks

AO3 is worth 10% of marks

AO4 is worth 13% of marks for the whole course

POETRY

WHAT IS POETRY?

Poetry can be a surprisingly difficult thing to define. What is it that makes a piece of literary writing into a poem, rather than simply a section of prose or drama? Often, the suggested answer to this question is given in terms of language. Where dramatic texts are based on performance and prose texts such as novels tend to be organised by story and character, poetry is usually thought of as depending on much more highly organised patterns of language. This generally means patterns of rhythm and patterns of rhyme that provide poetry with its structure in the same way as narrative often does for prose. For example, a poem like William Blake's 'The Tyger' has no plot or characters and is instead organised by a clear pattern of repeated rhythms and rhymes within the language. Similarly, what makes Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 116' a poem, rather than simply a set of thoughts and observations about love, is the highly ordered structure that is applied to the language. The difference between reading poetry and reading other forms of writing often means paying much more detailed attention to the language itself, rather than just what the language represents.

While defining poetry through its language can be useful, it is important, however, to recognise that in practice it is not always a simple task to clearly distinguish poetry from other forms of writing. Shakespeare's plays, for example, are dramatic works, but also repeatedly use detailed patterns of both rhythm and rhyme, meaning that they can be read as poetry as well as drama. Some forms of poetry are primarily meant to be performed aloud before an audience in the same way as drama, rather than read in isolation. This includes medieval ballads, as well as modern forms of performance poetry and rap music. Some poems contain complex plots and rich characters, and therefore come much closer to the form of the novel. John Milton's long 17th century poem 'Paradise Lost' is an example of this. Likewise, many novelists use beautiful and highly detailed language patterns that can be hard to separate from the form of poem. Finally, many writers write in different forms at different times; for example, Shakespeare wrote poems as well as plays while the Victorian author, Thomas Hardy, wrote both poems and novels. You should bear in mind that defining the difference between poetry and other forms of language is therefore a matter of emphasis, rather than a matter of hard, cut and dried distinctions.

POETS' IDEAS

It is a sign of how difficult it is to form a clear definition of poetry that many famous poets have produced many different descriptions of definitions, often disagreeing with each other in the process. Some poets have defined poetry in terms of the importance of language: Samuel Taylor Coleridge claimed that prose is 'words in their best order', while poetry is 'the best words in their best order'. Others have defined poetry in terms of emotion and feeling: William Wordsworth stated that 'Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings… emotion recollected in tranquillity.' A later poet called Matthew Arnold famously defined poetry as containing wisdom about life: 'poetry is at bottom a criticism of life… the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life – to the question: How to live.' Still others have suggested that it is impossible to truly define poetry other than by simply writing and reading it: A.E. Housman said 'I could no more define poetry than a terrier can define a rat.'

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The way that poetry resists simple or straightforward definitions is also linked to the fact that understanding of what counts as poetry, and what doesn't, changes dramatically over time. In the 16th and 17th centuries, poetry had to be written in a highly organised rhythm and use complex, difficult language, as it was by poets like Shakespeare in the 16th century and John Donne in the 17th century. If it didn't, it would not be considered poetry and certainly not good poetry. However, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a group called the Romantic poets overturned this understanding of poetry. In the preface to a revolutionary collection of poems called *Lyrical Ballads*, the Romantic poet William Wordsworth outlined a kind of poetry that used very simple rhythms and language and was written in 'the real language of men'. In the 20th century, understandings of poetry changed again, with much poetry experimenting with radical new rhythms and forms of language. This was the period when 'free verse', or poetry with no consistent rhythmical pattern, became popular, something which poets from earlier periods would not have considered as poetry at all.

▲ What's between the covers – poetry, drama or prose?

Assessment Objective 2
Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects

Assessment Objective 3
Explore links and connections between texts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- analyse individual poems
- provide a general introduction to the process of reading and understanding poetry.

KEY POINT

There are two essential questions that you should ask when approaching any poem. Firstly, what does the poem mean and/or what feelings does it generate? Secondly, what techniques are used to communicate those meanings and feelings?

MAKING SENSE OF POETRY

The first thing to think about is what meaning you can take from the poem. What is the poem *saying*, if you had to summarise it? Sometimes the answer is fairly clear. Rudyard Kipling's 'If –', for example, is clearly talking about what it takes to be a good and successful man. Many poems, however, might express more than one meaning or contain hidden meanings. Other poems are based on the communication of feelings and sensations rather than an identifiable meaning. William Blake's 'The Tyger' is a good example of this. Your own personal response is important. How does the poem make *you* feel? What does it mean to *you*? Questioning your own thoughts and reactions is at the heart of analysing poetry and can make it an exciting and meaningful process.

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION, COLLABORATION

▼ DIFFERENT MEANINGS

Read 'Half-Caste' by John Agard. Discuss the poem in a small group. Make a list of all the meanings that you take from it, and another list of all the feelings and sensations that are part of your individual reactions to it.

FINDING EVIDENCE

When analysing poetry, your personal response will never be enough on its own. To succeed in the exam, you need to take the next step and ask *how* the poet communicates meaning and feelings. In other words, your personal response needs to be supported by evidence that you have noticed within the poem. There are several different dimensions that you should look at when finding this evidence. Many of these points are addressed in greater detail in the other sections in this unit. They include things like poetic imagery, rhythm and rhyme, poetic structure and form, and the poet's choice of language.

ACTIVITY 2 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS

Look at the first stanza of John Keats's 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'.

> O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
> Alone and palely loitering?
> The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
> And no birds sing.

Make a list of the feelings and meanings that you take from the stanza and then make a parallel list of the techniques that communicate them. Compare your list to the one provided below (don't read this list until you have completed your own).

MEANING/FEELING	TECHNIQUE
Feeling of melancholy and sadness	Lots of long vowel sounds: lots of 'a's and 'o's and 'e's. 'O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms, / Alone and palely loitering?' This creates an effect of slowness and helps to produce the sense of a melancholy wasting and fading away.
Feeling that things have gone wrong; the natural order has been disturbed	The use of words that suggest sickness and the decay of nature, such as 'withered', 'ail' and 'palely'. The final line is much shorter than the others and therefore disturbs the rhythm that has been established in the first three lines. This creates a feeling of strangeness and disturbance in the usual order of things.
Setting feels medieval/ very old	The choice of archaic words that are not widely used today, such as 'thee', 'knight-at-arms' and 'sedge'.

HIDDEN MEANINGS AND FEELINGS

Another thing which will improve your answer in the exam is to look for meanings and feelings that are **implicit** and below the surface, as well as those which are more obvious.

'War Photographer' by Carol Ann Duffy is literally about a photographer developing photographs. However, you need to work harder to think about what Duffy might be trying to say through her descriptions of the photographer. Is the poem talking about the horrors of war, the psychological damage done to the photographer or the coldness of Western societies which only access war through newspapers? You need to argue in support of one of these interpretations by using evidence from the poem. If you can access implicit as well as explicit meaning in this way, it will help to improve the quality of your response.

▲ Photos can have implicit and explicit meanings

GENERAL VOCABULARY

implicit suggested or understood without being told directly

ACTIVITY 3

A02

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION, CO-OPERATION

▼ EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT MEANING

Working with a partner, pick one of the poems in the Anthology. One person writes down what they consider the explicit or literal meaning of the poem to be. The other person writes down any implicit meanings or ideas they can find. Compare what you have written. Do both pieces together produce a comprehensive description of the poem's meaning?

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A02 **A03**

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, ADAPTIVE LEARNING, CREATIVITY

HINT

Try to apply the methods you have used in the activities above to answer the question.

Discuss the representation of nature in John Keats's 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'.

In your answer, you should consider the poet's:

- descriptive skills
- choice of language
- use of structure and form.

Support your answer with examples from the poem. **(30 marks)**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- know what figurative language is
- identify different kinds of figurative language
- understand why poets might choose to employ figurative language.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figurative language is language that is used in a non-literal way. Poets adapt words and phrases using figurative language, such as metaphors, similes and personification. This presents things that are not literally true, things that do not exist in the real world, but that are nevertheless able to communicate powerful truths.

METAPHOR

Metaphor is a kind of figurative language where one thing is described by relating it to another. The thing which the poet is trying to describe is technically known as the 'tenor' and the image which they use to describe it is known as the 'vehicle'. With metaphor, the connection between tenor and vehicle is presented as being direct: the tenor is the vehicle. Imtiaz Dharker employs a metaphor in 'Blessing' that uses the image of a god to describe water:

> Imagine the drip of it,
> the small splash, echo
> in a tin mug,
> the voice of a kindly god.

SIMILE

A simile resembles a metaphor, but with a simile the relationship between tenor and vehicle is less direct. Instead of saying that the tenor is the vehicle, similes claim that the tenor is *like* the vehicle or shares some resemblance with it.

▲ The water was as calm as a sleeping baby

HINT

Forms of figurative language often play a crucial role in making the language of poetry vivid and powerful. It is important that you can show that you understand this and can identify the different kinds of figurative language, as well as the effects they have in individual poems.

ACTIVITY 1

A02

SKILLS ANALYSIS, COOPERATION, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

▼ USE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

'Sonnet 116' by William Shakespeare is a poem that uses a variety of figurative language to describe love. Work with a partner and find all of the individual metaphors that Shakespeare uses in the sonnet. Then discuss with your partner why Shakespeare chooses to describe love using metaphors in this way. What are the advantages of describing love through metaphors rather than describing it literally?

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

Read William Blake's 'The Tyger'. This is a poem that uses a lot of figurative language. More interestingly, it also poses some problems for the way figurative language usually works. This is because it repeatedly states that the tiger cannot actually be described and is beyond the poet's powers of representation: 'What immortal hand or eye, / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?' Bearing this in mind, how might you write about the use of figurative language in 'The Tyger' in an exam?

PERSONIFICATION

GENERAL VOCABULARY

inanimate not living

Personification is a kind of figurative language that can be achieved by means of a simile or a metaphor, but that can also be achieved in other ways. Something that is **inanimate** is treated as if it has a personality and character. Describing the sea as angry or a forest as threatening are examples of personification because they attribute emotions and character traits (qualities) to things that do not possess personalities. The way that Dharker describes the water in 'Blessing' is an example of personification because it treats the water as if it has character traits such as generosity and power.

KEY POINT

Metaphor is based on a direct identification between tenor and vehicle, while simile is based on a less direct form of comparison between tenor and vehicle. The effect of personification can be produced through a metaphor or a simile, but can also be produced in other ways.

▲ The angry sea

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

Re-read 'Sonnet 116'.

Compare the way that love is presented in 'Sonnet 116' and one other poem in the Anthology.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

HINT

Use what you have learned about metaphors, similes and personification to help you answer this question.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand some of the other techniques which poets use to produce meaning
- understand poetic effects, including the use of connotation, the manipulation of sounds, syntax and structure.

CREATING MOOD, ATMOSPHERE AND EMOTION

There are several methods besides figurative language that a poet can draw on to produce powerful and vivid effects. It is always important to look very closely at the choice of words that a poet makes. What is the poet suggesting or implying by selecting certain words, rather than others? How does their choice contribute to the poem's ability to communicate its meaning or express feelings and emotions?

CONNOTATIONS

It can be helpful here to think about what words suggest or imply, as well as what they literally mean. Look at the following lines from Robert Browning's 'My Last Duchess' as an example of this:

> Her husband's presence only, called that spot
> Of joy into the Duchess' cheek

'Spot' here literally means the red blush which appeared on the lover's cheek when she was happy.

However, 'spot' also suggests a blemish or imperfection; a small sign of damage on something that otherwise seems good and wholesome.

It is this second implication that is really the more significant, as it expresses the poem's central theme of violence and darkness lurking beneath an apparently luxurious and beautiful surface.

▲ Blushing

HINT

The literal meaning of a word is the one that it 'denotes', while the suggested or implied meanings are those which it 'connotes'. With poetry, connotative meaning is usually far more important than it is with other kinds of language.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

imply to suggest that something is true, without saying this directly
implication a possible future effect or result of an action, event or decision
lurking hiding or existing without someone seeing it or knowing about it

ACTIVITY 1 A02

SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, COLLABORATION, TEAMWORK

▼ WORD CHOICE

Work in a small group and read 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night' by Dylan Thomas. Divide the stanzas evenly between the members of the group. Each person should look at their stanza and look closely at the words that Thomas uses. Consider the following questions.

- **What meanings do these words express through connotation and suggestion, in addition to their literal meaning?**
- **What patterns of connoted meaning does Thomas build up in this way?**

SOUNDS AND MEANING

The sounds of words are often directly linked to their sense and meanings: this is a defining feature of poetry. Take the following lines from Louis MacNeice's 'Prayer Before Birth':

> those
> who would dissipate my entirety, would
> blow me like thistledown hither and
> thither or hither and thither

KEY POINT

Understanding how a poem creates moods, atmosphere and emotions means looking well beyond the literal meaning of the language. It means looking at the meanings and feelings which the words imply, at the sounds that words make, and the order in which they have been arranged.

MacNeice heavily repeats the 'th' sound of '*th*istledown', 'hi*th*er' and '*th*i*th*er'. This makes the lines difficult to say as you are reading. This recreates the feeling of giving up control and instead being blown around from one 'th' sound to the next.

When looking at sound, there are some particular effects that it can be helpful to think about. One of the most important is rhyme. Does the poet emphasise certain words by rhyming them together? Is there a consistent rhyme scheme that supports the poem's meaning and effects? Another effect is alliteration: the repetition of consonant sounds. MacNeice's repetition of the 'th' sound is an example of alliteration.

ORDER AND STRUCTURE OF WORDS

In addition to implication and sound, the order or structure of the words can serve a vital role in generating mood, atmosphere and emotion. A poem like 'Poem at Thirty-Nine' by Alice Walker uses very short lines and very short sentences.

This has the effect of fragmenting the poem and breaking it up. It also helps to create the impression of someone remembering fleeting memories from their childhood that they can only partially recall.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

fleeting lasting for only a short time

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

HINT

Try to use what you have learned about how poets generate mood, atmosphere and emotion when you answer this question.

Re-read 'Blessing' and 'Prayer Before Birth'.

Compare the way that childhood is presented in 'Blessing' and 'Prayer Before Birth'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand what poetic metre is
- understand how poetic language makes use of rhythmical patterns and related effects.

FORM, RHYTHM AND METRE

Form, rhythm and metre are all features used by poets to create a wide range of effects within their work. By understanding the difference between these and the impact each can have upon the way a poem is read and interpreted, it is possible to gain a fuller understanding of poetry as a whole.

METRE

Metre is the pattern of emphasis that the poet uses in order to create the rhythm of a poem. As you are reading any poem, think about which sounds the poet is making you emphasise or ‘stress’. Do the stresses form a recognisable pattern? The most widely used metre in English poetry is called iambic pentameter. Shakespeare wrote most of his plays and poems in iambic pentameter and his ‘Sonnet 116’ is a good example:

> (Ad**mit**) (im**ped**)(i**ments**). (Love **is**) (not **love**)
> (Which **al**)(ters **when**) (it **al**)(tera)(tion **finds**),

Other poems use an unstructured metre that does not follow a regular pattern, but which changes from line to line. This is called ‘free verse’. Alice Walker’s ‘Poem at Thirty Nine’ is a good example of free verse.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

iambic using a light, unstressed beat followed by a heavy, stressed one: tee-*tum* (this pair of beats is called an iamb)
pentameter a line of poetry containing five pairs of beats or ten syllables

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

Try to identify the metres of ‘The Tyger’ and ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci’. This will be a little harder than it is with ‘Sonnet 116’, because both of these poems slightly alter or adapt traditional metres.

HINT

It is important to be able to identify what kind of metre a poet is using, as well as being able to identify other effects such as repetition, enjambment, rhyme scheme and alliteration. To really earn marks in the exam, you need to be able to talk about why the poet uses techniques like these and what effect they have on the reader.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

enjambment the interruption of a sentence by the ending of a line, often producing a shocking and striking effect; for example, in ‘Poem at Thirty-Nine’: ‘I wish he had not been / so tired / when I was / born’
alliteration the use of several words together that begin with the same sound or letter

THE EFFECT OF METRE

It is important to ask what the effects of a particular metre are. What mood does the rhythm create? For example, William Blake’s ‘The Tyger’ uses a very strong rhythmical pattern that places a very heavy stress on the final syllable of each line:

> Tyger Tyger, burning **bright**,
> In the forests of the **night**

The force of this emphasis helps to communicate the force and wild power which the tiger represents.

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, COOPERATION

▼ SPOKEN POETRY

Work with a partner and choose one poem from the Anthology. Read it aloud and work out where you think the emphasis is placed and whether the poet is using a consistent metre or writing in free verse. Next, try reading it aloud in different ways, deliberately emphasising different syllables.

▶ **How do different ways of reading change the feel of the poem?**

FORM AND STRUCTURE

Once you are confident with rhythmical and other kinds of effect at the level of individual words and lines, you can begin to look at the way they work together at the level of the whole poem. Doing this means you are looking at the poem's 'form' and 'structure'. Talking about form means talking about the shape and number of stanzas, the pattern that lines make in combination with each others and the overall organisation of the poem. The sonnet form, for example, is 14 lines of rhymed iambic pentameter. Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 116' is obviously a sonnet, but so is Christina Rossetti's 'Remember'.

Talking about structure is similar, but means talking in particular about the order in which the poem is arranged. 'My Last Duchess', for example, is structured so that certain important information only becomes clear at the end of the poem and is revealed by the narrator through implication rather than through direct statement.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sonnet a 14-line poem with a formal structure, consisting of a set pattern of lines; the Shakespearian sonnet contains three quatrains and a couplet (four and two lines respectively); the Petrarchan sonnet contains an octave and a sestet (eight and six lines respectively)

narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

ACTIVITY 2 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, TEAMWORK

▼ ANALYSING FEATURES

Work with a partner and choose a poem from the Anthology. One person makes a list of the techniques that the poem uses at the level of lines and words: things like metre, repetition, enjambment and rhyme. For each technique, note how it contributes to the poem's effect. The other person makes a list of the features that define the poem at the level of its form and its structure. You should be able to combine your lists to produce a complete reading of the poem.

KEY POINT

Pay attention to two things when analysing the features of a poem: the techniques that a poem uses at the level of individual words and lines, and the way that these techniques help to shape the poem as a whole at the level of its overall form and structure.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A02 **A03**

Re-read 'My Last Duchess' and 'War Photographer'.

How is violence presented in 'My Last Duchess' and 'War Photographer'?

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

HINT

Use the things you have learned about metre, form and structure to help you answer this question.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- gain the skills and techniques you will need to approach an unseen poem in the exam.

UNSEEN POEMS

In the exam you will be asked to analyse a poem that you have not seen before. This might be quite straightforward: it might be quite obvious what the poem is about, what it means and what feelings it generates. However, you might have a poem which makes it more difficult to establish these basics and what is happening in the poem. It is this kind of poem that you need to prepare for. You need to know these basic points before doing the kind of detailed analysis outlined so far in this section.

PREPARING FOR UNSEEN POEMS

Read the First World War poem 'Channel Firing' by Thomas Hardy.

▼ 'CHANNEL FIRING' BY THOMAS HARDY

That night your great guns, unawares,
Shook all our coffins as we lay,
And broke the chancel window-squares,
We thought it was the Judgment-day

And sat upright. While drearisome
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:
The mouse let fall the altar-crumb,
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, "No;
It's gunnery practice out at sea
Just as before you went below;
The world is as it used to be:

"All nations striving strong to make
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters
They do no more for Christés sake
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

"That this is not the judgment-hour
For some of them's a blessed thing,
For if it were they'd have to scour
Hell's floor for so much threatening...

"Ha, ha. It will be warmer when
I blow the trumpet (if indeed
I ever do; for you are men,
And rest eternal sorely need)."

Bombers at night

HINT

Often the title of a poem will give a clue to the most important aspects. In this case, the title 'Channel Firing' tells you that the poem is set near the English Channel (the area of sea between England and France) and that it is related to guns firing.

So down we lay again. "I wonder,
Will the world ever saner be,"
Said one, "than when He sent us under
In our indifferent century!"

And many a skeleton shook his head.
"Instead of preaching forty year,"
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,
"I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer."

Again the guns disturbed the hour,
Roaring their readiness to avenge,
As far inland as Stourton Tower,
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.

This poem does not give the reader a lot of help when it comes to basic things like what is happening, what the setting is and who is speaking to whom. Instead, it asks the reader to do a lot of work to find out these things themselves. This is the work that you would need to do if you were faced with a poem like this in the exam.

UNDERSTANDING UNSEEN POEMS

Who is speaking and who is being addressed? This is often a crucial question when it comes to analysing a difficult poem.

- What voices are speaking in 'Channel Firing'? There are a few different voices at different points.
- What situation is the narrator of the poem in? What events and experiences are they describing?
- Does the speaker have a particular motivation? Are they trying to persuade anyone of anything?

What is the setting of the poem?

- In what kind of place is 'Channel Firing' set?
- What physical events happen in the setting as the poem progresses?

What is the meaning of the poem? Now you can start to think about what ideas the poem communicates.

- What does the narrator think and feel about the things that happen in 'Channel Firing'?
- What wider point or idea do you think Hardy might be trying to communicate through the poem?

If you can successfully answer all of these questions, it should give you a good understanding of the basic elements of the poem which you could then use as the foundation to talk about more advanced things like figurative language, sound, rhythm and structure.

KEY POINT

It is important to have the basic elements of a poem clear in your mind before moving on to the analysis of poetic techniques. Answering questions like 'who is speaking to whom?', 'what situation is the poem set in?' and 'what events happen in the course of the poem?' are key to helping you do this.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A02

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, ADAPTIVE LEARNING, CREATIVITY

How does the poet create a feeling of solitude in Robert Frost's 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'?

In your answer, you should consider the poet's:

- descriptive skills
- choice of language
- use of structure and form.

Support your answer with examples from the poem. **(20 marks)**

HINT

Practise the techniques that you have learned so far using the unseen poems and exam questions provided below. When preparing your answers, think about both the basic elements, such as what the poems are about and who is speaking, as well as more advanced questions of poetic technique and how meanings and feelings are communicated.

▼ 'STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING' BY ROBERT FROST

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

He gives his harness bells a shake (9) Look closely at the references to sounds and to silence in this stanza. How do these references help to generate the poem's mood and tone?

woods (13) Notice the way that the word 'woods' is repeated in this poem. What is the effect of this choice?

- ▶ **What details does the poet give the reader which help to build up a feeling of isolation?**
- ▶ **What effect is produced by the change of rhyme scheme in the final stanza?**

▶ Settings can inspire emotions and ideas

STRONG SAMPLE ANSWER

9th

In this poem the poet uses several effects to help create the feeling of solitude[1]. There are many references to the fact that he is isolated, far away from houses or the village and from the owner of the woods saying 'He will not see me stopping here'[2]. This therefore sets up a contrast between the community represented by the houses and the village and the isolation of the speaker[3]. This is supported by the fact that the speaker is repeatedly linked to darkness and cold, it being said that it is 'The darkest evening of the year' and 'snowy' and 'frozen', again highlighting how far he is from human society[4].

The horse is also used to help communicate the feeling of solitude because it finds the situation eerie and confusing, shaking his harness bells 'To ask if there is some mistake'. Sound is very important here[5], with the poet creating the impression of absolute silence being interrupted by the sounds of the bells and the snow, which is 'the only other sound'. This helps to intensify the feeling of spookiness that comes with someone being entirely alone in a deserted landscape. The poet further emphasises these feelings of isolation by the use of repetition[6] in the last two lines. By saying 'And miles to go before I sleep' twice, he forces the reader to consider how far he is from a house or settlement where he could rest[7].

[1] Focused introductory sentence, clearly answering the question.

[2] This answer uses examples from the poem to support its points very well.

[3] Taking time to develop and further explore their observations of the poem to a more sophisticated level.

[4] Good attention to the ways in which the poet creates mood.

[5] Sophisticated observation of poetic technique.

[6] Good use of appropriate literary terminology.

[7] The student covers a good range of poetic techniques, adding structure to mood and sound.

WEAKER SAMPLE ANSWER

7th

There is a lot of solitude in 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening[1]' . The poet is far away from houses and has only his horse for company[2]. It is dark and snowy so he feels very alone, saying that 'the woods are lovely, dark and deep'. The horse becomes alarmed because it thinks it is 'queer to stop without a farmhouse near'. The poet uses a rhyme scheme of aaba, meaning that he rhymes the last words of the first two lines and the last word of the last line of each stanza, but doesn't rhyme the third line. This can be seen in the first stanza which has 'know' and 'though' as the last words of the first two lines, and 'snow' as the last word of the last line, but 'here' as the last word of the third line[3]. The poet says that he has a long way to travel before he reaches the destination he is aiming for, which I assume is his own house that must be located on the far side of the woods from the village[4]. The poet says that 'he will not see me stopping here' and he has stopped 'without a farmhouse near' and that he has miles to go before he sleeps, reinforcing the impression of solitude[5]. This poem creates a strong impression of what it is like to be alone in the countryside at night[6].

[1] Opening sentence doesn't really make sense, and is a clumsy use of language.

[2] This is accurate, but is stating the obvious unless it is followed up by further exploration and analysis.

[3] There is no attempt to link the rhyme scheme to the question, which asks about solitude. The writer also over-explains the rhyme scheme, possibly just as a device to fill up space.

[4] There is no evidence for this assumption, and indeed the poem is deliberately ambiguous (unclear) about the figure that is speaking and their journey.

[5] The student is just filling up space by quoting sections of the poem without analysis. They would get some credit, however, for at least identifying relevant quotations.

[6] Little attempt has been made in this answer to analyse how this impression is created.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A02

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, ADAPTIVE LEARNING, CREATIVITY

Discuss the way that the poet, Boey Kim Cheng, presents the city in 'The Planners'.

In your answer, you should consider the poet's:

- descriptive skills
- choice of language
- use of structure and form.

Support your answer with examples from the poem. **(20 marks)**

They plan. They build. (1) Who might the poet be referring to when he says 'they'?

They erase the flaws, / the blemishes of the past, knock off / useless blocks with dental dexterity. (10) Notice how the poet repeatedly relates the city to the forgetting of the past.

Anaesthesia, amnesia, hypnosis. (17) The contrast between what the city represents and what poetry represents in this last stanza is crucial to the poem as a whole.

▼ 'THE PLANNERS' BY BOEY KIM CHENG

They plan. They build. All spaces are gridded,
filled with permutations of possibilities.
The buildings are in alignment with the roads
which meet at desired points
linked by bridges all hang
in the grace of mathematics.
They build and will not stop.
Even the sea draws back
and the skies surrender.

They erase the flaws,
the blemishes of the past, knock off
useless blocks with dental dexterity.
All gaps are plugged
with gleaming gold.
The country wears perfect rows
of shining teeth.
Anaesthesia, amnesia, hypnosis.
They have the means.
They have it all so it will not hurt,
so history is new again.
The piling will not stop.
The drilling goes right through
the fossils of last century

But my heart would not bleed
poetry. Not a single drop
to stain the blueprint
of our past's tomorrow.

STRONG SAMPLE ANSWER

In 'The Planners', the poet uses a range to techniques to produce a vivid image of the city. The first[1] stanza uses technical words like 'alignment' and 'mathematics', which create a feeling of order and precision. However this is also combined with a feeling of beauty, as the space is described as 'filled with permutations of possibilities' and hanging 'in the grace of mathematics'[2]. There is therefore a powerful tension between order and beauty which continues to develop throughout the[3] poem. This stanza also sets up the opposition between the grid of the city and nature, as 'the sea draws back / and the skies surrender'.

The second stanza continues this sense of opposition[4] between nature and the city by using the extended metaphor[5] of dentistry – comparing the building of the city with a dentist putting fillings into a mouth. The poet again manages to communicate a sense of beauty through the image of 'gleaming[6] gold' fillings. This stanza also combines the theme of the city replacing nature with the theme of the city replacing the past, as 'history is new again' and 'The drilling goes right through / the fossils of last century'.

The final stanza contradicts what has been said in the rest of the poem. This is shown through the use of the word 'But'[7] in its opening. The poet then contrasts poetry with the order of the city. Where the city doesn't cause any pain because it is an 'anaesthesia', poetry is connected with bleeding, and therefore the return of pain[8]. Although the city is neat and organised, it is not perfect and needs the pain of poetry. Where the city erases the past, poetry creates 'the blueprint / of our past's tomorrow'.

[1] This answer is very clearly structured, as it moves through the different stanzas in order.

[2] Very sophisticated understanding of the associations of the language in the poem.

[3] This answer is good at seeing how the poem works as a whole as well as in individual lines and stanzas.

[4] Feeling of coherence – the paragraphs in this answer flow neatly on from each other.

[5] Appropriate literary terminology.

[6] This answer is very thorough in providing examples.

[7] Good grasp of rhythm and the effects of grammar here.

[8] The last stanza of 'The Planners' can be interpreted in a number of ways, and this answer does a good job of selecting an interpretation and defending it.

WEAKER SAMPLE ANSWER

'The Planners' is a poem about the building of[1] a new country that destroys[2] nature. The city is made up of roads and buildings that replace the sea and sky. The city is also seen as good because it is 'desired' and contains 'possibilities'[3]. The poet creates the feeling that the city will be a wonderful place for people to live[4]. One important image that the poet uses is teeth, comparing the city to a mouth full of teeth that need to be fixed so that they are 'perfect'[5]. The people building the city are referred to as 'they', but the poet never explains who 'they'[6] are, making them seem very mysterious. The poem also states that 'history is new[7] again'.

At the end of the poem the poet says 'my heart would not bleed / poetry'. This shows that once the city is complete poetry will no longer be needed, because poetry is like bleeding and once all the teeth have been filled in the patient won't bleed anymore[8]. This idea is reinforced in the metaphor[9] of mathematics, with the feeling that maths needs to replace poetry[10]. The goodness of the city can again be seen in the statement 'The buildings are in alignment with the roads / which meet at desired points / linked by bridges all hang / in the grace of mathematics. They build and will not stop'[11].

Overall this is a poem about the importance of cities and why humanity needs to build cities in order to survive into the future[12].

[1] Obvious statement, no analysis going on.

[2] Does not really reflect the spirit of the poem.

[3] This answer consistently overlooks the complexity of the poem's view of the city – it is not simply 'good' in a straightforward sense.

[4] The student provides no evidence for this statement.

[5] The student does well to identity this image, but fails to talk about the specific effects which it has upon the reader.

[6] Potentially a good point, but it is not sufficiently developed.

[7] No reference to the significance of this quotation within the answer as a whole.

[8] The student misinterprets the final stanza of the poem.

[9] Mathematics are not treated as a metaphor in this poem.

[10] This is not the spirit of the poem.

[11] This is an unnecessarily long quotation, possibly added just to fill space as the student is running out of ideas.

[12] Reconfirms the fact that the poem has not been fully understood.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A02

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, ADAPTIVE LEARNING, CREATIVITY

How does the poet present nature in Walt Whitman's 'Patrolling Barnegat'?

In your answer, you should consider the poet's:

- descriptive skills
- choice of language
- use of structure and form.

Support your answer with examples from the poem. **(20 marks)**

▼ 'PATROLLING BARNEGAT' BY WALT WHITMAN

Wild, wild the storm, and the sea high running,
Steady the roar of the gale, with incessant undertone muttering,
Shouts of demoniac laughter fitfully piercing and pealing,
Waves, air, midnight, their savagest trinity lashing,
Out in the shadows there milk-white combs careering,
On beachy slush and sand spirts of snow fierce slanting,
Where through the murk the easterly death-wind breasting,
Through cutting swirl and spray watchful and firm advancing,
(That in the distance! is that a wreck? is the red signal flaring?)

Slush and sand of the beach tireless till daylight wending,
Steadily, slowly, through hoarse roar never remitting,
Along the midnight edge by those milk-white combs careering,
A group of dim, weird forms, struggling, the night confronting,
That savage trinity warily watching.

lashing (4) Notice the repetition of 'ing' which comes with the use of verbs in the present continuous tense: what effect does this have?

Through cutting swirl and spray watchful and firm advancing (8) Where is the emphasis placed in this line and how does that emphasis help to communicate the poem's meaning?

(That in the distance!... is the red signal flaring?) (9) Why does the poet choose to ask the reader a question here?

Slush and sand (10)

Steadily, slowly (11) Sibilance with repetition of the 's' sound.

▶ A fishing boat at sea

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A02

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, ADAPTIVE LEARNING, CREATIVITY

How is the experience of the lovers presented in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Silent Noon'?

In your answer, you should consider the poet's:

- descriptive skills
- choice of language
- use of structure and form.

Support your answer with examples from the poem. **(20 marks)**

▼ 'SILENT NOON' BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass, --
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.

Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky: --
So this wing'd hour is dropt to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of love.

Your eyes smile peace (3) Why does the poet disobey the normal rules of grammar and sentence construction here?

nest (5) What effect is created by the description of the lovers in a 'nest'?

sky (10) Why is the sky mentioned repeatedly in 'Silent Noon'?

▶ A dragonfly in summertime

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- analyse both seen and unseen poems
- compare poems.

COMPARING AND LINKING POEMS

In the exam you will be asked to use the skills that you have learned so far in this section to compare two poems with one another. The question will often provide you with a theme that is important to both poems for you to base your comparison around.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

In the exam you will be asked to compare **two** poems. You will have a choice of **two** questions: **either** comparing two specific poems from the Anthology with each other **or** comparing a specific Anthology poem with any other poem from the Anthology. Each question is worth 30 marks.

In this section, you will read an unseen poem, 'Blackberry-Picking', and an Anthology poem, 'Piano', and compare the way that memory is presented in them. This is for illustrative purposes only and in the exam you will not be asked to compare an unseen poem with one from the Anthology.

KEY POINT

The key to the exam is being able to use the methods of analysis that you have learned. This includes looking at figurative language, the creation of mood and tone, and poetic rhythm, in order to compare poems with one another.

▲ Wild blackberries

▼ 'BLACKBERRY-PICKING' BY SEAMUS HEANEY

Late August, given heavy rain and sun
For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.
At first, just one, a glossy purple clot
Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.
You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet
Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it
Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for
Picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger
Sent us out with milk cans, pea tins, jam-pots
Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.
Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills
We trekked and picked until the cans were full,
Until the tinkling bottom had been covered
With green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned
Like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered
With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's.

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.
But when the bath was filled we found a fur,
A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.
The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush
The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.
I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair
That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.
Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.

MAKING COMPARISONS

The first thing to do is to establish the very basics of each poem: what is the poem about, who is speaking, what events take place within it? At this point you should also ask how each poem relates to the theme that is raised in the question.

With a poem from the Anthology, like 'Piano', you should already be fairly familiar with this. With an unseen poem, however, you should take a few moments to establish these basics, as this will form the foundation of the rest of your answer.

ACTIVITY 1

A02

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, INTERPRETATION

▼ POETRY ANALYSIS

Write a few short sentences, noting down what you think 'Blackberry-Picking' is about, what kind of voice is speaking, and what events and experiences are communicated. Note down too how 'Blackberry-Picking' relates to the idea of memory.

Once you have the basics of each poem, you can start to think about how to compare the ways that they present the central theme: in this case, the theme of memory. This is also where your personal response comes in.

- **What are the key features of each poem's presentation of memory?**
- **What feelings and ideas do these poems raise for you?**

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

In order to prepare for the exam, try going through the process outlined on these pages with other pairs of poems — both poems from the Anthology and other poems which you could find in poetry collections or by asking your teacher for advice.

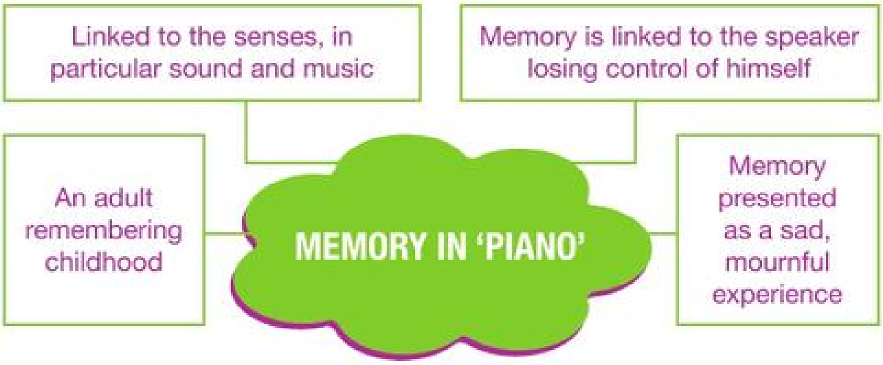
ACTIVITY 2

A02

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, TEAMWORK

▼ POETRY THOUGHT CLOUD

Work with a partner and draw a thought cloud for each poem detailing all of the things that are important in its presentation of memory. An example is provided below for 'Piano'. Add any other points you think should be included, and produce another one for 'Blackberry-Picking'.


Linked to the senses, in particular sound and music
Memory is linked to the speaker losing control of himself
An adult remembering childhood
MEMORY IN 'PIANO'
Memory presented as a sad, mournful experience

By this point, you should have a good understanding of each poem. This means understanding both what it is about and what feelings and meanings it contains. You should also start to see how you could compare the poems in terms of their presentation of memory.

For example, 'Piano' and 'Blackberry-Picking' are similar since they are both about an adult recalling a childhood experience. However, in 'Piano', the speaker talks about the adult world they live in now as well as their childhood past, whereas 'Blackberry-Picking' focuses only on the world of childhood.

The rest of your time in the exam will be spent building on these ideas by analysing and comparing **how** the poems communicate, in addition to **what** they communicate. Comparing things like figurative language, mood, sound, rhythm and structure as they are used in 'Piano' and 'Blackberry-Picking' should provide you with a strong foundation to answer a question about the way they present memory.

- **Do the poems use any figurative language? If so what is the effect of that language?**

ACTIVITY 3 **A02** **A03** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, INNOVATION

▼ PICKING OUT TECHNIQUES

Copy and complete the table with a list of all the points in 'Blackberry-Picking' and 'Piano' where metaphors, similes or personification are used, and note next to each one why the poet uses it and what effect it has. Does one poem use more figurative language than the other? If so, this might be a good point of comparison.

▼ FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE	▼ EFFECT
Simile: 'Among others, red, green, *hard as a knot*'	Transforms the blackberries, which would normally be imagined as soft, into something hard and tight.

MOOD, ATMOSPHERE AND EMOTION

It is important to consider a poet's choice of words. How do the words chosen help the poems to communicate their meaning? Look at both the connotations and implied meanings of words and the sounds that they make. Does the poet repeat similar sounds to produce effects of alliteration or rhyme? Do they repeat words that have similar meanings and associations to build up a particular feeling or idea?

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sibilance a form of alliteration characterised by or producing a hissing sound like that of *s* or *sh*

- **Looking again at 'Piano' and 'Blackberry-Picking', what sounds are repeated in each poem and what effect does this have? For example, 'Piano' uses sibilance by repeating a lot of 's' sounds, while 'Blackberry-Picking' rhymes 'knot' with 'clot' and 'pots' with 'boots'. How do these choices contribute to the effect of the poem?**

ACTIVITY 4 **A02** **A03** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION, TEAMWORK, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

▼ CHOICE OF LANGUAGE

In a small group, look at the words and phrases used in 'Blackberry-Picking'.

Note down what you think each word or phrase suggests as well as what they literally mean. Next, identify the key words and phrases in 'Piano' and do the same thing.

glossy
summer's blood
rat-grey fungus
lust
sticky as Bluebeard's
the tinkling bottom
the sweet flesh would turn sour
peppered
stains

FORM, RHYTHM AND METRE

GENERAL VOCABULARY

jarring different in style

As well as looking at the choice of words in a poem, you must think about the rhythm and structure. How do the lines feel to read? Are they smooth and flowing or jarring and disjointed? What syllables does the poet emphasise? In terms of structure, how are the poems organised? What is the order of events and does the mood change or develop as the poem progresses?

ACTIVITY 5 **A02** **A03** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, COLLABORATION, NEGOTIATION

▼ READING ALOUD

Work with a partner and each note down the words and sounds that you feel are stressed in one of the two poems, and what you think the effect of the stress is. Discuss your readings of the poems with each other. Do you agree with or have anything to add to your partner's reading?

GENERAL VOCABULARY

rotting badly decaying

ACTIVITY 6 **A02** **A03** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

▼ BREAKING DOWN POEMS

Break each poem down into three or four smaller units (the division between stanzas might be helpful to you here). For example, you might divide 'Blackberry-Picking' into:

- description of summer and the blackberries
- description of the boys picking the blackberries
- description of the blackberries rotting in their containers.

Then think about the effect that this structure has on the meaning of the poem. What mood is created by ordering its content in this way?

KEY POINT

First get the basics of what each poem is about clear in your mind. Then establish the meanings, ideas and feelings that you think the poem produces, considering where the two poems contrast with one another and where they are similar. Spend the remaining time looking at how the language communicates this content through techniques like figurative language, mood, sound, rhythm and structure. Again, be careful to highlight points of similarity and points of contrast between the two poems on all of these points.

‘IF–’

RUDYARD KIPLING

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Rudyard Kipling was born in 1865 in India, in the city of Bombay (now known as Mumbai) and died in 1936. Before his death, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He was also offered a knighthood (a British honour or award for achievement given by the Queen), but he refused it. Much of his work is based on his knowledge of India and the East, especially the stories in *The Jungle Book*, now best known from the Disney cartoon film. He was known as a very patriotic person, but his attitudes were changed deeply by the loss of his son (John, to whom the poem ‘If–’ is addressed) in the First World War.

▲ Bombay (Mumbai) in the late 1800s

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don’t deal in lies,
Or being hated, don’t give way to hating,
And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream — and not make dreams your master;
If you can think — and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you’ve spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build ’em up with worn-out tools:

If you(1) Repetition plays an important role throughout the poem; by repeating the word ‘if’, the author could suggest uncertainty and difficulty.

Or being lied about, don’t deal in lies, / Or being hated, don’t give way to hating (6-7) Kipling gives two examples of the general principle of not repaying evil with evil.

Triumph and Disaster(11) Abstract nouns are used here, giving a sense of personification that make the ideas easier to relate to and more engaging.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

pitch-and-toss an old gambling game in which players had to throw coins as close to a wall as possible

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings — nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And — which is more — you'll be a Man, my son!

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

iambic using a light, unstressed beat followed by a heavy, stressed one: tee-*tum* (this pair of beats is called an iamb)
pentameter a line of poetry containing five pairs of beats or ten syllables
dramatic monologue where a single person (first-person narrator) tells the events, especially in a poem, either to a single listener or to the reader
narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

FORM

'If—' is structured in four stanzas, each containing eight lines and focused on related virtues. It is written in iambic pentameter and follows a regular rhyme scheme of ABABCDCD, though the opening three lines finish with the same word ('you'). The poem is a single long sentence in the conditional tense, featuring multiple clauses linked by frequent use of conjunctions ('and', 'or' and 'but') and punctuation marks. It finishes with an exclamation mark.

CONTENT

'If–' is addressed to the writer's son, John, but is more widely directed at any young boy growing into adulthood. In the final line, the words 'my son' come as a shock, as the leader realises that this is a dramatic monologue by a father speaking directly to his son. For most of the poem, the reader is likely to assume that it is addressed to people in general because of the first-person perspective and use of the second person pronoun 'you', which can either be singular or plural. It works, therefore, as both a specific and a general address.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

virtues a particular good quality in someone's character

The poem features a long list of virtues the writer believes his son must possess and for each aim there is a potential obstacle, e.g. 'If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you'. Rather than writing the specific attributes, such as patience ('If you can wait and not grow tired of waiting') and honesty ('don't deal in lies'), he lists hypothetical examples of situations where he may have the opportunity to show these virtues. The list is long, complex, abstract and probably impossible, which reflects that growing-up and adulthood are also difficult and complex. Repetition of the word 'if' show that the subject's success is dependent on his ability to meet each condition. The use of the contraction 'you'll' at the end of the final stanza, rather than more uncertain words like 'might' or 'probably', makes it seems that the poem is like an informal agreement between the father and son. If he is able to do show that he possesses all these virtues, he will be successful.

It is not until the final two lines that the reader learns what the narrator believes his son's overall aim should be ('Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, / And — which is more — you'll be a Man, my son!). 'Everything' suggests material riches, but the more abstract notion of being able to consider yourself 'a Man' is said to be more valuable. The steady rhythm and flowing structure build to a final exclamation. Along with its direct address to the reader and the message that if you remain principled and strong in the face of adversity then you can achieve anything, this makes the poem extremely emotive. You might also think it is humorous: if you can do all of these things, many of which are impossible, then you can consider yourself an adult!

ACTIVITY 1

A02

SKILLS ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show the qualities that Kipling admires
- focus on features of Kipling's language and its effect, such as repetition, personification and metaphor
- be words that seem striking or unusual to you and that convey Kipling's powerful ideas.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'keep your head…'	He should not panic under pressure.
'talk with crowds and keep your virtue'	He should be able to relate to all people, 'high or low'.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

direct address using second person pronoun 'you' or 'your'

metaphor describing something by comparing it to an image which it resembles, in a way that suggests the object is the image

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

'If–' is often referred to as an inspirational or motivational poem, with the writer giving encouragement to a young person and advice about how to live. If you think of qualities that Kipling admires, such as courage, self-belief, perseverance, or staying calm under pressure, then you may find links to other poems.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ **How do you think a teenager would react to being given the advice in this poem?**
- ▶ **How do the form and structure of the poem help to present the ideas?**
- ▶ **Why might the attitudes in this poem be described as stoical? Do you think this is a good word to use?**
- ▶ **Why are some of the ideas in the poem linked to sport?**

GENERAL VOCABULARY

stoical not complaining when bad things happen to you

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 A03

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'If–' and 'Sonnet 116'.

Compare the ways that the poets give advice in 'If–' and 'Sonnet 116'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

2 Re-read 'If–'.

Show how being good and successful is presented in 'If–' and one other poem in the Anthology.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

‘PRAYER BEFORE BIRTH’
LOUIS MACNEICE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Louis MacNeice was born in 1910 and died in 1963. The poem ‘Prayer Before Birth’ was written in 1944, during the Second World War. At that time, people in Britain were experiencing regular attacks from the ‘doodlebug’ (also known as the V1), a frightening flying bomb that fell silently from the sky. This is a poem that expresses deep concern about the life that was in store for children being born into such a world.

I am not yet born; O hear me.
Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the
club-footed ghoul come near me.

I am not yet born, console me.
I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me,
with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me,
on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.

I am not yet born; provide me
With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk
to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light
in the back of my mind to guide me.

I am not yet born; forgive me
For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words
when they speak me, my thoughts when they think me,
my treason engendered by traitors beyond me,
my life when they murder by means of my hands,
my death when they live me.

I am not yet born; rehearse me
In the parts I must play and the cues I must take when
old men lecture me, bureaucrats hector me, mountains
frown at me, lovers laugh at me, the white
waves call me to folly and the desert calls
me to doom and the beggar refuses
my gift and my children curse me.

I am not yet born; O hear me,
Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God
come near me.

▲ Wartime London

I am not yet born(1) Repetition is used throughout to draw attention to the narrator and highlight one of the poem’s main concerns.

bloodsucking bat(2) MacNeice uses alliteration throughout the poem to draw attention to the unpleasant imagery setting a dark tone.

black racks rack(7) The use of assonance creates a sense of rhythm while also strengthening the imagery.

forgive(12) sins(13) God(26) Religious language acts to contrast ideas of hope and fear.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

dandle	cradle gently
engendered	caused
hector	bully or intimidate

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

assonance	resemblance of sound, especially of the vowel sounds in words

GENERAL VOCABULARY

dragoon force someone
lethal automaton a 'killing machine', with no feelings; it links to the word 'dragoon', as dragoons were heavily armed soldiers

I am not yet born; O fill me
With strength against those who would freeze my
humanity, would **dragoon** me into a **lethal automaton**,
would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with
one face, a thing, and against all those
who would dissipate my entirety, would
blow me like thistledown hither and
thither or hither and thither
like water held in the
hands would spill me.

Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.
Otherwise kill me.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

imperative a verb that gives an instruction or command
narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

FORM

'Prayer Before Birth' is a dramatic monologue written in the form of a prayer from a first-person perspective, directly addressing God. Even though it is free verse, MacNeice's use of repetition, punctuation and structure gives the poem rhythm. The first, second and eighth stanzas are each structured as two sentences, while all other stanzas are made up of one long sentence each. The eight stanzas vary in length, increasing from three lines in the first, to ten lines in the seventh. Stanzas six (three lines) and eight (two lines) do not follow this trend, but break up the fast, flowing pace to give emphasis to their contents.

With the exception of the last, each stanza begins with 'I am not yet born' followed by an imperative to God while the first and last lines end with the word 'me'. In the first and second stanzas, the imperative is followed by a full stop, but in stanzas three to seven, MacNeice uses enjambment to increase pace.

CONTENT

The narrator of the poem is an unborn child, directly addressing God. The use of 'I am not yet born' at the beginning of each stanza reminds the reader that, while the vocabulary and ideas expressed are complex, the narrator is an unborn child. Each of the narrator's pleas are an appeal for protection, creating a sense that the child will be powerless and corrupted by the world. MacNeice elaborates on this idea by removing responsibility for the child's actions ('For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words / when they speak me, my thoughts when they think me'). He will be subject to the whims of other men and the circumstances he lives in ('blow me like thistledown'). The third stanza's tone differs significantly from the others, as the narrator asks to be provided with something, rather than to be protected. It refers to natural wonders ('grass to grow for me, trees to talk / to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light…') and is contrasted, in particular, with the seventh stanza. The seventh stanza seems to refer to war and the idea that the unborn child will be 'a cog in a machine' and part of a 'lethal automaton'. It also contains a reference to water in a metaphor for death ('like water held in the hands would spill me'), inviting comparison with the earlier more innocent reference to water from the third stanza ('provide me / With water to dandle me'), showing loss of innocence throughout the future life of the narrator.

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show a world full of fears and nightmarish thoughts
- focus on features of MacNeice's language and its effect, looking at such aspects as his use of alliteration and assonance/rhyme
- be words that seem striking or unusual to you and that convey MacNeice's powerful ideas.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'blood sucking bat… club-footed ghoul'	These harsh-sounding words give an immediate impression of a world of vampire and ghost films, with creatures that would terrify a young child.
'Otherwise kill me'	The strong request at the end is sudden and unexpected. The child does not want to be born into a world of such horrors unless it can be protected.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

The poem is about birth and death, but also the world of the child. This world contains hopes of warmth and love, but also fears of nightmares and terrors, and a background of war and betrayal.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

onomatopoeia where a word sounds like the noise it makes

- **Although the poem shows the fears of an unborn child, how far does it also show adult fears?**
- **Look at the examples of MacNeice's use of alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia. Where do these mainly occur in the poem and why are they used?**
- **How would you describe the overall mood and tone of the poem?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'Prayer Before Birth' and 'Blessing'.

Explore the use of religious language in 'Prayer Before Birth' and 'Blessing'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

2 Re-read 'Prayer Before Birth'.

Show how the poets use literary effects (such as rhyme, rhythm, repetition, alliteration and assonance) in 'Prayer Before Birth' and one other poem in the Anthology.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

‘BLESSING’
IMTIAZ DHARKER

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Imtiaz Dharker was born in Pakistan in 1954 and grew up in the UK. In addition to being a poet, she is also an artist and a documentary film maker. It is possible to see the influence of her filmmaking and her painting in the poem ‘Blessing’, through its focus on striking visual images and pictures. ‘Blessing’ is set in the city of Bombay (known today as Mumbai) in India during the dry season. It describes the effect of water being given to the people through a burst pipe. It is a political poem about poverty and drought, as well as a beautiful description of the physical experience of water.

▲ Drought-stricken earth

The skin cracks like a pod.
There never is enough water.

Imagine the drip of it,
the small splash, echo
in a tin mug,
the voice of a kindly god.

like a pod(1) the voice of a kindly god(6) crashes to the ground(9) Use of figurative language such as simile and metaphor.

drip(3) splash, echo(4) roar(11) screaming(19) highlights(20) light(21) sings(22) Use of sense experience, for example, sound, touch, taste.

the voice of a kindly god(6) the flow has found / a roar of tongues(10/11) Personification of the water.

tin(5) silver(9) brass, copper, aluminium(15) polished;(21) flashing(21) Use of imagery related to metal.

kindly god(6) congregation(12) blessing(22) Religious imagery.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

municipal owned and operated by the government
congregation a religious gathering of people, often an audience attending a church service

Sometimes, the sudden rush
of fortune. The **municipal** pipe bursts,
silver crashes to the ground
and the flow has found
a roar of tongues. From the huts,
a **congregation**: every man woman
child for streets around
butts in, with pots,
brass, copper, aluminium,
plastic buckets,
frantic hands,

and naked children
screaming in the liquid sun,
their highlights polished to perfection,
flashing light,
as the blessing sings
over their small bones.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

FORM

Notice the unusual structure that Dharker uses, dividing the poem into four stanzas all of different lengths. This seems to be done in quite a random way, with no obvious reason for the position of the breaks between stanzas. Perhaps this apparently random structure reflects the idea of the water bursting out and spreading itself across the earth in a free and disordered way. Another possible reason for the irregular stanza length (very short – long – slightly shorter) is to reflect the idea of the water dripping out slowly before bursting into a huge torrent and then falling away again.

Look at the way that sentences are organised to reflect the experience that the poem describes. The opening lines use a lot of very short, simple sentences such as ‘There never is enough water’. The third stanza, however, uses much longer sentences that very quickly add more and more things, frantically describing ‘pots, brass, copper, aluminium, plastic buckets, frantic hands’. This reflects the idea of moving from a state where very little is happening and the water only comes in small drips to a state where the water rushes out very fast.

CONTENT

Dharker uses lots of different images to describe the water, but they are all designed to make it feel exciting and powerful. Figurative language is used to describe water as being like a god, like money, like precious metal and like the sun. Techniques that make something that is not alive seem like it is and gives it a personality are called personification. This idea of the water as a living force is crucial to the effect of ‘Blessing’. Try listing the techniques which are used in this poem to bring to life the world it describes.

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show how Dharker portrays the scene
- focus on features of the descriptive language used and its effect in creating vivid imagery
- pick out the effect of words that seem striking or unusual, and of words that convey Dharker's ideas.

LANGUAGE	COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'There never is enough water.'	This bold statement acts to label water as precious. The use of punctuation enforces this.
'silver crashes to the ground'	This image of liquid metal is vivid, portraying the water as something valuable and beautiful.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

This poem is about poverty. In the last stanza it also focuses on the importance and experience of children and in particular on children who are suffering. 'Blessing' is also a very sensual poem, focusing extensively on the significance of vivid experiences of sight, sound and touch. In addition, 'Blessing' is a poem that makes something that might not seem very important at first (for example, a water pipe bursting) seem very significant and beautiful. All of these features provide strong potential links with other poems.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **Look specifically at words in the poem which refer to sounds, for example, 'drips' or 'roar'. What is the significance of sound in 'Blessing'?**
- **What might Dharker be trying to communicate to the reader about the children in her description of them in the final stanza? Why does she focus on the children rather than the men and women mentioned earlier in the poem?**
- **Highlight all the places where alliteration is used in 'Blessing' and think in each case about why the poet has chosen to use it.**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'Blessing' and 'The Tyger'.

Explore how religion is presented in 'Blessing' and 'The Tyger'.
You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

2 Re-read 'Blessing'.

How do the poets present sense experience, such as sound, sight, touch and smell, in 'Blessing' and one other poem from the Anthology?

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

‘SEARCH FOR MY TONGUE’
SUJATA BHATT

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Sujata Bhatt was born in India in 1956 and emigrated to America in 1968. During her childhood she mainly spoke an Indian dialect called Gujarati, but moved to a culture dominated by the English language after her family travelled to the USA. This experience of moving between different languages can clearly be seen in the poem ‘Search for My Tongue’. Bhatt has taught at many universities across Europe and America and has won numerous awards for her poetry.

You ask me what I mean
by saying I have lost my tongue.
I ask you, what would you do
if you had two tongues in your mouth,
and lost the first one, the mother tongue,
and could not really know the other,
the foreign tongue.
You could not use them both together
even if you thought that way.
And if you lived in a place you had to
speak a foreign tongue,
your mother tongue would rot,
rot and die in your mouth
until you had to ‘spit it out’.
I thought I spit it out
but over night while I dream,

મને હતું કે આખ્ખી જીભ આખ્ખી ભાષા,
(munay hutoo kay aakhee jeebh aakhee bhasha)

મેં થૂંકી નાખી છે.
(may thoonky nakhi chay)

પરંતુ રાત્રે સ્વપ્નામાં મારી ભાષા પાછી આવે છે.
(parantoo rattray svupnama mari bhasha pachi aavay chay)

You ask me what I mean(1) I ask you, what would you do(3) You… if you thought that way… if you lived(8–10) you had to ‘spit it out.’ I thought I spit it out(14–15) Conversational tone, addressing the reader directly through questions and answers.

tongue(2) Notice the repetition of ‘tongue’.

would rot, / rot and die(12–13) it grows back, a stump of a shoot / grows longer, grows moist, grows strong veins(31–32) the bud opens, the bud opens in my mouth(34) it blossoms out of my mouth(38) Metaphor of the tongue as a plant, either growing or rotting.

ફુલની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ
(foolnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં ખીલે છે.
(modhama kheelay chay)

ફુલની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી
(fullnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં પાકે છે.
(modham pakay chay)

it grows back, a stump of a shoot
grows longer, grows moist, grows strong veins,
it ties the other tongue in knots,
the bud opens, the bud opens in my mouth,
it pushes the other tongue aside.
Everytime I think I've forgotten,
I think I've lost the mother tongue,
it blossoms out of my mouth.

A blossoming flower

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

FORM

The poem is made up of three sections. The first is written in English, the second in Gujarati and the final one translates that Gujarati back into English. The use of Gujarati is very important because it represents the dream-state where the poet's native tongue re-emerges and overtakes the foreign tongue. It is also important because it is a way for Bhatt to put the assumed English reader in her situation of dealing with a foreign tongue. The reader is presented with a language that is strange to them and which they do not understand, just as the poet has had to learn English as a foreign tongue. By writing in Gujarati, Bhatt forces the reader themselves to deal with a 'foreign tongue'.

The fact that the poem is structured around questions and answers is also important. Bhatt uses a very informal, direct tone that makes it feel as if she is having a personal conversation with the reader. By using statements like 'You ask me what I mean', she also creates the sense of a conversation in which the reader is asking questions and she is responding. This creates the feeling of a close connection between reader and poet. However, it also produces the sense that the two have difficulty understanding each other and that there is a distance between them; a difficulty which needs to be overcome by asking and answering questions.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

pun an amusing use of a word or phrase that has two meanings, or of words that have the same sound but different meanings

CONTENT

The use of 'tongue' to refer to both a language (for example, English or Gujarati) and an actual physical tongue or piece of flesh is key to 'Search for My Tongue'. Bhatt uses this double-meaning (also called a **pun**) to represent the competition between two languages as a literal fight between two tongues competing for space in her mouth.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

rotting decaying by a natural process
blossoming flowering

She then explores this situation through an extended metaphor that presents the tongue as a plant, first **rotting** away and then growing back and **blossoming**. While she thinks that her native (or mother) tongue has died and been replaced by the foreign tongue, the fact that she still dreams in her mother tongue is significant. This reminds her that it will always be the native language with which she is most at home.

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

Work with a partner and select key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show the **narrator's** relationship with language
- focus on features of Bhatt's language and its effect, particularly where this has been highlighted in the text
- pick out the effect of words that seem striking or unusual to you and that convey Bhatt's ideas.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'You ask me what I mean'	Through direct address, the reader is immediately drawn into the poem and is encouraged to form their own view.
'the foreign tongue'	The other tongue is alien and isolated – represented literally by placing it on a line of its own.
'rot and die in your mouth'	The use of emotive and strong language creates a vivid, striking image.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

This poem is about the importance of language. It is also focused on ideas of a person's origins, their birth and parentage. It works by making familiar things, like someone's native tongue, seem strange and unfamiliar. It also presents a culture, namely Indian culture, that readers may not be familiar with if they are only used to reading and writing in English. All of the features provide strong potential links with other poems.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **Why does Bhatt choose to associate her native language with the figure of the mother, through the image of the 'mother tongue'?**
- **How does it feel to you to read the section in Gujarati? How does this reading experience differ from reading English?**
- **What is the significance of the dream? Why is it in a dream in particular that the mother tongue is recovered?**
- **The poet talks about having 'two tongues' in her mouth. What does this say about her identity and the way it is divided between her new and her old homes?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'Search for My Tongue' and 'Poem at Thirty-Nine'.

Compare how the relationship with parent figures is presented in 'Search for My Tongue' and 'Poem at Thirty-Nine'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read 'Search for My Tongue'.

How do the poets present memory in 'Search for My Tongue' and one other poem in the Anthology?

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

‘HALF-PAST TWO’
U.A. FANTHORPE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

U.A. Fanthorpe, whose full name was Ursula Askham Fanthorpe, was born in 1929 and died in 2009. She had a number of different jobs, including working for a while as a teacher, and she often wrote about her experience of the world of work. ‘Half-past Two’ is based on a real or imagined incident in the life of a teacher and child.

A clock in a classroom

Once upon a schooltime
He did Something Very Wrong
(I forget what it was).

And She said he’d done
Something Very Wrong, and must
Stay in the school-room till half-past two.

(Being cross, she’d forgotten
She hadn’t taught him Time.
He was too scared at being wicked to remind her.)

He knew a lot of time: he knew
Gettinguptime, timeyouwereofftime,
Timetogohomenowtime, TVtime,

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

colloquial slang or informal language

Once upon a schooltime(1) This is a slight variation on the classic fairytale opening; what does this make you think will come later in the poem?

Something Very Wrong(2, 5) The use of capital letters makes the reader aware that the child thinks it was a terrible thing he had done, but the writer cannot remember what it was; forgetting is something of a theme.

half-past two(6, 15) time(8, 10, 14, 29, 31) forgotten(7) forgot(31) Words and phrases associated with time and memory are repeated throughout to show their importance, but also suggest a sense of confusion and forgetfulness.

Gettinguptime, timeyouwereofftime, / Timetogohomenowtime, TVtime, / Timeformykisstime(11–13) These compound words are a fun play on colloquial, day-to-day time periods, used here to show confusion.

important times(14) Shows that the boy does not give importance to the standard way of telling the time; think about which times he does think are important.

click(18) clock(16, 32) Scuttling(26) tick(33) Examples of onomatopoeia, used here to show the importance of time and its impact on the child.

silent noise(23) An **oxymoron**: the adjective seems to contradict the noun.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

oxymoron a figure of speech in which the writer combines two ideas that are opposites; this frequently has a startling or unusual effect
omniscient knowing everything within the world of the novel or play, including the secrets of all the characters and what the future holds
third person using the third person – that is, 'he', 'she'and 'it'; this differs from the first person ('I') and the second person, which directly addresses the reader ('you')
narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

Timeformykisstime (that was Grantime).
All the important times he knew,
But not half-past two.

He knew the clockface, the little eyes
And two long legs for walking,
But he couldn't click its language,

So he waited, beyond onceupona,
Out of reach of all the timefors,
And knew he'd escaped for ever

Into the smell of old chrysanthemums on Her desk,
Into the silent noise his hangnail made,
Into the air outside the window, into ever.

And then, *My goodness*, she said,
Scuttling in, *I forgot all about you.*
Run along or you'll be late.

So she slotted him back into schooltime,
And he got home in time for teatime,
Nexttime, notimeforthatnowtime,

But he never forgot how once by not knowing time,
He escaped into the clockless land for ever,
Where time hides tick-less waiting to be born.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

FORM

'Half-past Two' features an **omniscient third-person narrator**. The poem is written in free verse, containing 11 stanzas of three lines. The majority of these feature one or two sentences, though Fanthorpe's use of enjambment means that some stanzas contain no complete sentences. This combination of long sentences and short stanzas reflects the way that the young boy, about whom the poem is written, experiences time.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

neologisms a new word or expression

CONTENT

The poem is a simple story of a boy who is given a detention by his teacher and daydreams while waiting for her to return to the classroom. Fanthorpe explores two main themes in the poem: time and innocence. Use of frequent childish-sounding **neologisms** ('schooltime', 'gettinguptime', 'TVtime') show how the boy relates time to specific events throughout the day, rather than worrying about a schedule. The events themselves are important, but the time at which they occur is not. This reflects his limited concept of time, his immaturity and the absence of pressure on him. This is contrasted with his teacher, who is forgetful and appears to be very busy and concerned with schedule. While the boy is able to daydream and forget about time ('He escaped into the clockless land'), the teacher worries that he'll be late.

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show how Fanthorpe presents the child or the teacher
- focus on features of Fanthorpe's language and its effect, including personification, onomatopoeia and repetition
- be words that seem striking or unusual to you (such as her use of compound words) and that convey Fanthorpe's ideas.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'He knew the clockface, the little eyes'	This shows how the child in his imagination compared the clock to a 'person' with a face and legs, although he did not realise how it told the time.
'time hides tick-less waiting to be born'	'Time' is personified as someone not yet born, which shows time as set in an eternal world; time was not yet born for the child in the sense that he had not been able to measure it.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

The poem focuses on the world of the child and how this is affected by the actions of adults. It also looks at how the young child's mind works, with its confusion about things beyond his understanding and the strong use of the imagination.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sympathetic applied to a character in fiction, this means a character who is liked by the reader or other characters

- ▶ **How does Fanthorpe's use of 'compound words' (invented for the poem) add to the effect of the poem?**
- ▶ **When the child 'escaped' into a timeless world, to what extent do you feel that this was a happy experience for him?**
- ▶ **Does Fanthorpe present the teacher and her actions in a sympathetic way?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'Half-past Two' and 'Hide and Seek'.

Compare how being left alone is presented in 'Half-past Two' and 'Hide and Seek'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read 'Half-past Two'.

Explore how the passage of time is presented in 'Half-past Two' and one other poem in the Anthology.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

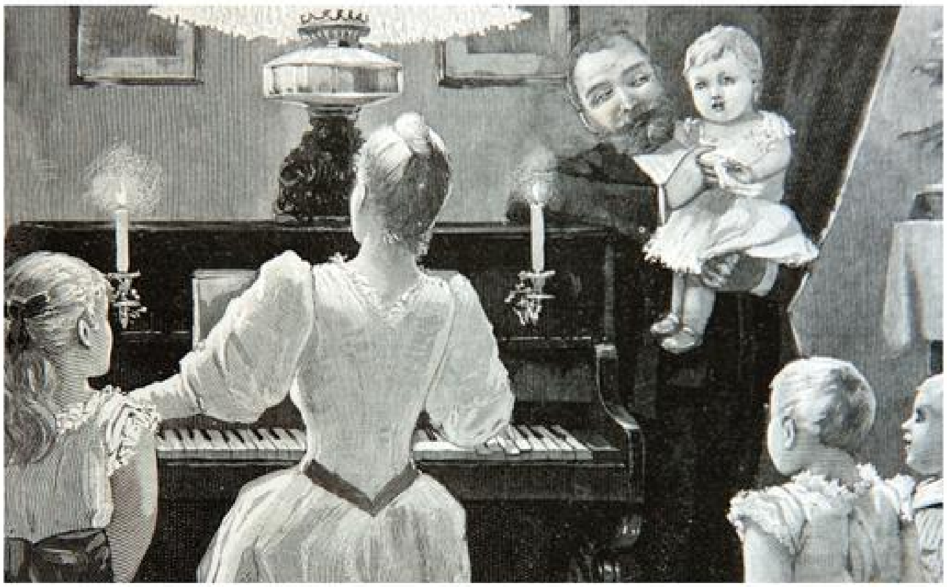
'PIANO'
D.H. LAWRENCE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

David Herbert (D.H.) Lawrence was born in 1885 in a coal-mining town in Nottinghamshire, UK, where his father worked as a miner. He died in 1930, after being ill with tuberculosis. He was devoted to his mother, who died of cancer when he was just 25, which had a deep effect on him. Although he is famous mainly for his novels, he also wrote over 800 poems.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

tuberculosis	a serious infectious disease
vista	a view, in this case of the memories he has over the years
insidious	creeping up in a gradual and threatening way
appassionato	an Italian musical term meaning 'played with passion'



Christmas in the early 1900s

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

singing(1) child(3) piano(3,8,10) weeps(6,12) Words that are repeated in varied forms as the poem progresses; this shows the significance of these things throughout the narrator's life and his attachment to the past.

boom(3) tingling(3) tinkling(8) Examples of onomatopoeia emphasising the qualities of the piano.

pressing the small, poised(4) Alliteration helps to create a musical, sing-song rhythm.

years(2) back(6) old(7) past(12) Words connected with the past, showing the importance of the past to the narrator.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

FORM

'Piano' is a lyric poem. It has 12 lines in three equal-length stanzas and is written from a first-person perspective. Lawrence uses enjambment to create a flowing structure: each stanza contains a single, long sentence and ends with a full stop.

The rhythm consists mostly of dactyls ('Softly in…') ' but sometimes spondees ('myself') and there is a straightforward rhyme scheme (AABB and so on). The last word in each stanza is a monosyllable containing long stresses ('sings', 'guide', 'past') which, in combination with internal rhyme ('tingling', 'strings', 'sings') and alliteration give the poem a gentle pace, steady rhythm and sense of melody. Both the past and present action are described in the present tense, giving a sense that reality and memory feel equally real to the poet. He is reliving the memories, rather than recalling them.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

dactyl a group of three beats, one stressed followed by two unstressed: *tum*-te-te (this rhythm is called dactylic)
spondee a pair of beats, both equally stressed: *tum-tum* (this rhythm is called spondaic)
narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

CONTENT

The poem describes how a singer's performance leads the narrator to feel nostalgic when reliving memories from his youth. As the title suggests, each memory is linked to music. Stanzas one and two each focus on a different memory relating music, while in the final stanza the poet laments the passing of his childhood. Lawrence shows that the narrator is powerless to stop himself from reliving the memories by using phrasing which makes him appear passive ('Taking me back down', 'Betrays me back'). It is important to note that he does not play or sing himself. Music happens around him, but he is not in control of it, as he is unable to control his reaction to it. By the end of the poem, the narrator is emasculated by his longing for the past ('my manhood is cast down') and behaving as if he were a child ('I weep like a child'). This simile describing the narrator's strong reaction – in which he behaves like a younger version of himself – asserts, once more, that he relives these memories rather than just thinking about them.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

nostalgic remembering a happy time in the past
emasculated made to feel weaker and less male

Sensory language helps the reader to empathise with the narrator. While this includes the visual ('till I see a child sitting under the piano') and touch ('pressing the small, poised feet'), it is more frequently audial. The theme of music is clearly reflected in his choice of vocabulary, with repetition of different forms of 'sing' ('sings', 'singing', 'song'), the technical term 'appassionato', references to the piano and use of onomatopoeia ('boom', 'tingling strings', 'tinkling piano').

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table on page 102. These may:

- show how strong Lawrence's feelings are about his childhood with his mother
- focus on features of his language and its effect, including alliteration, onomatopoeia, metaphor and simile
- be words that seem striking or unusual to you and that convey Lawrence's ideas.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'the boom of the tingling strings'	The use of onomatopoeia helps the reader to be able to use the senses to imagine the scene.
'And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings'	This tender line helps the reader to visualise the closeness between the child and mother: the young boy presses the mother's feet as she presses on the pedal of the piano.
'insidious mastery of song'	This presents music as a powerful controller trapping the listener like a slave, so powerful is the song.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

The themes of this poem are mainly the memory of childhood and the love between a child and their mother. There is also the subject of the power of the senses (in this case, the sound of music) to create memories. There are other poems in the Anthology that focus on events in people's childhood and others that look back into the past or that show a parent-child relationship. In 'War Photographer', it is a visual stimulus (a photograph) that evokes memories of a different place, so there are some interesting links that could be explored here.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **How would you describe the tone of Lawrence's writing in this poem?**
- **Why does this memory cause him to 'weep like a child'?**
- **In what ways does Lawrence's presentation of sound reinforce the ideas of the poem? How do the other senses contribute to the overall effect (think especially of sight and touch)?**
- **What impression does the poem give of Lawrence's early life? How does the fact that in adult life Lawrence experienced much unhappiness, especially over the death of his mother, make a difference to your understanding of the poem?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'Piano' and 'Poem at Thirty-Nine'.

Compare the presentation of an adult looking back on their childhood in 'Piano' and 'Poem at Thirty-Nine'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read 'Piano'.

Show how sound is important in 'Piano' and one other poem in the Anthology.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

'HIDE AND SEEK'
VERNON SCANNELL

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Vernon Scannell was born in 1922 in Lincolnshire and died in 2007. He was a soldier in the Second World War and afterwards did a variety of jobs, including working as a professional boxer, as well as being a well-known writer and poet. He wrote many poems about his wartime experiences.

▶

▲ Children playing hide and seek

Call out. Call loud: 'I'm ready! Come and find me!'
The sacks in the toolshed smell like the seaside.
They'll never find you in this salty dark,
But be careful that your feet aren't sticking out.
Wiser not to risk another shout.
The floor is cold. They'll probably be searching
The bushes near the swing. Whatever happens
You mustn't sneeze when they come prowling in.
And here they are, whispering at the door;
You've never heard them sound so hushed before.
Don't breathe. Don't move. Stay dumb. Hide in your blindness.
They're moving closer, someone stumbles, mutters;
Their words and laughter scuffle, and they're gone.

▶

Call out. Call loud(1) Repetition initially suggests childish excitement.

smell(2) The senses, including touch and smell, create the atmosphere of the child's hiding-place.

Call(1) be careful(4) Stay(11) don't come(14) Examples of command terms used throughout – like the instructions given for a child's game.

hushed(10) mutters(12) scuffle(13) Examples of onomatopoeia that act to paint a vivid image of the location.

bites(19) The use of personification of the weather perhaps suggests that even natural forces are against the child.

dark damp smell(20) Alliteration adds a sense of rhythm, mimicking heightened emotions and excitement.

bites(19) garden watches(25) hold their breath(26) Examples of personification, heightening the sense of tension and anticipation.

But don't come out just yet; they'll try the lane
And then the greenhouse and back here again.
They must be thinking that you're very clever,
Getting more puzzled as they search all over.

It seems a long time since they went away.
Your legs are stiff, the cold bites through your coat;
The dark damp smell of sand moves in your throat.
It's time to let them know that you're the winner.
Push off the sacks. Uncurl and stretch. That's better!
Out of the shed and call to them: 'I've won!
Here I am! Come and own up I've caught you!'
The darkening garden watches. Nothing stirs.
The bushes hold their breath; the sun is gone.
Yes, here you are. But where are they who sought you?

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

FORM

'Hide and Seek' is structured in two stanzas: one of 17 lines and the other of ten lines. It is a free verse poem and, as such, there is no clear rhythm or rhyme scheme, and the structure of lines varies significantly, following no set pattern. There is some use of enjambment, but the majority of lines feature at least one complete sentence, with some featuring numerous short sentences. It has a second-person narrator which is the inner voice of a boy – in the form of a monologue – as he hides from his friends during a game of hide and seek. There is also some speech as they boy calls aloud to his absent friends.

CONTENT

While the subject of the poem seems relatively innocent, Scannell's vocabulary and careful use of punctuation, rhyme and alliteration create tension. The confident exclamations in the opening line are followed by an innocent reference to the smell 'of the seaside'. But the tone changes in the third line, which has several possible meanings: that they may never find the boy because he has found such a good hiding place; that they might not find him because they do not really care to look for him – highlighting the boy's isolation and loneliness; or, a darker possibility is they might not find him because he cannot be found and he is in danger. If Scannell was trying to show that this was simply another show of confidence from the boy, he could have punctuated with an exclamation mark, but instead the sentence runs onto a warning on the next line ('but be careful…'). At the end of the poem, the boy reveals himself, but his friends are nowhere to be seen and he is left alone in the dark. While the reader cannot know the age of the boy, you can assume that he is quite young and innocent as he is playing hide and seek. This assumed innocence, in conjunction with the creepy tone, makes the audience empathise with the boy, but also fear for him. This is reinforced by the use of the word 'prowling' to describe his friends as they try to find him, with its connotations of a predator seeking prey.

Even though the vocabulary is quite simple, the narrator's voice seems more mature than the boy's actions (compare it with 'Half-past Two', for example). It seems unlikely a young boy would say 'Their words and laughter scuffle', for example. Combined with the second-person perspective, this adds further tension, as it seems as if the boy is at the mercy of another character.

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- add to the increasing tension in the poem
- focus on features of Scannell's language and its effect, especially his use of the senses
- be words that seem striking or unusual to you and that convey Scannell's ideas in an effective way.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'The bushes hold their breath'	This personification is effective: the natural surroundings are like watchers, waiting to see what happens when the emerging child discovers that they have been left.
'They'll never find you in this salty dark'	This gives a good impression of the child's hiding-place, with the senses of sight and taste brought into the description.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

This poem about a childhood memory has obvious links with others in the collection, but especially perhaps 'Half-past Two', where the child is again isolated and inhabits a timeless world of the imagination. Think about the similarities and differences in how the two writers treat their subject.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **How does Vernon Scannell's language help the reader to see and feel the events that take place?**
- **Is the ending surprising? Explain your answer.**
- **Why might such an experience have a great effect on the child who is the subject of the poem?**
- **How would you describe the overall tone and mood of the poem?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'Hide and Seek' and 'War Photographer'.

Compare the ways that the loss of innocence is presented in 'Hide and Seek' and 'War Photographer'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

2 Re-read 'Hide and Seek'.

How does the mood change over the course of the poem in 'Hide and Seek' and one other poem in the Anthology?

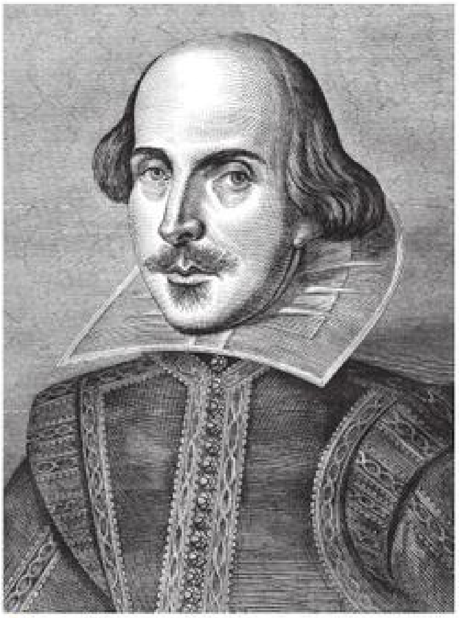
You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

'SONNET 116'
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564 and died in 1616. He is Britain's most famous playwright and his plays are still performed all over the world, having been translated into many languages. Not so many people know his poems, which included 154 sonnets. *The Sonnets* are poems on the theme of love and some are written to particular people, such as the mysterious 'dark lady'. 'Sonnet 116' is one of the most popular of all the sonnets, because the ideas are thought by many people to show the strength of true love.



A portrait of William Shakespeare

GENERAL VOCABULARY

bark	an old word for boat
doom	the end of time

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no, it is an ever-fixèd mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds(1) The narrator is both thinking of marriage itself and also of two minds joined together in love.

love is not love(2) Repetition is used throughout to emphasise and develop ideas and themes.

ever-fixèd mark(5) A light or visible object to guide ships.

It is the star to every wandering bark(7) Words linked to sea travel develop a nautical metaphor for love.

sickle's compass come(10) Alliteration emphasises the language choice.

I never writ, nor no man ever loved(14) Negative words are used throughout to demonstrate the strength of his beliefs.

According to 'Sonnet 116', people may change but love does not.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

FORM

The Shakespearean sonnet form consists of 14 lines written in iambic pentameter. Though it is structured as one stanza, the first twelve lines are split into three equal quatrains, following a regular rhyme scheme (ABAB CDCD EFEF). The final two lines are a rhyming couplet (GG). It is written from a first-person perspective.

CONTENT

Each quatrain describes a different characteristic of love: in the first quatrain, the narrator shows that true love does not change ('love is not love / Which alters when it alteration finds'); the second quatrain presents a nautical metaphor for true love, which is seen to steer a path through a stormy sea guided by a fixed beacon or star; and the third quatrain states that love is unaffected by time or death. The poem does not attempt to define love, but rather shows its enduring and powerful nature through indirect examples, showing that, unlike all other earthly things, love does not age or die. In the second quatrain he uses a metaphor which is open to interpretation ('It is the star to every wandering bark'), while in quatrains one and three the narrator shows what love is by using examples of what it is not ('Love's not Time's fool'). This idea of pairs and opposites can be found elsewhere in the vocabulary: 'love is not love', 'alters when it alteration finds' and 'the remover to remove'. It is a reflection of the need for balance in a relationship, referring to a pair of lovers. In the rhyming couplet at the end of the sonnet, the narrator shows his confidence by issuing an amusing challenge to the reader: if he is incorrect about the nature of love, then he has never written anything and no man has ever truly loved. Of course, he has this poem to prove that he has written!

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sonnet	a 14-line poem with a formal structure, consisting of a set pattern of lines; the Shakespearian sonnet contains three quatrains and a couplet (four and two lines respectively); the Petrarchan sonnet contains an octave and a sestet (eight and six lines respectively)
quatrain	a four-line stanza
narrator	a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show Shakespeare's thoughts about change and constancy
- focus on features of his language and its effect, including his use of metaphors and personification
- be words that seem striking or unusual to you, perhaps because they seem old-fashioned, or they may convey Shakespeare's ideas in interesting ways.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'Love's not Time's fool'	Love and Time are both personified, and Shakespeare is saying that Time cannot make a fool of Love.
'rosy lips and cheeks…'	These are the outward signs of beauty that are much admired, but they fade with time, unlike true love.
'O no'	This is a strong exclamation, which shows that he rejects strongly the idea that has just been stated.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

constancy	the quality of staying the same even though other things change

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

The central idea of this poem, that of love, is one that can be found in other poems in the Anthology, but love comes in many different forms and sometimes it does not last (for example, in 'My Last Duchess'). Other ideas you can find in poems in this section deal with the subject of the passing of time and the subject of change.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

GENERAL VOCABULARY

contemporaries those who lived or were in a particular place at the same time as someone else

- **Think about how Shakespeare writes about changing and unchanging things. Why does he suggest that love is able to resist change?**
- **Why do you think Shakespeare chooses to write about a (metaphorical) journey at sea? Think about the following:**
  - **Shakespeare lived at a time of great sea adventures: Sir Francis Drake, an English sea captain, and Sir Walter Raleigh, an English explorer and writer, were his contemporaries**
  - **sea travel was extremely dangerous and following the right route was very difficult without modern navigational aids.**
- **How does Shakespeare use 'negative' language to develop the theme of the poem?**
- **Why do you think Shakespeare believes that love can last for ever?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'Sonnet 116' and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'.

Compare the presentation of love in 'Sonnet 116' and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read 'Sonnet 116'.

Explore how time is presented in 'Sonnet 116' and one other poem in the Anthology.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

'LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI: A BALLAD'
JOHN KEATS

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

John Keats was born in 1795 and died at the young age of 26 from tuberculosis. He trained as a surgeon, but later gave up his training to concentrate on his poetry. He was one of the group of romantic poets writing at the same time as Wordsworth and Coleridge. He fell in love with Fanny Brawne, but they never married. The ballad form displayed in 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' was taken from the Middle Ages. Such ballads traditionally contained themes such as love and death. The title of the poem is taken from a French lyrical poem by the writer Alain Chartier, which Keats had read in translation; it means 'the beautiful lady without pity'.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

ballad	a short story in the form of a poem or song

▲ A medieval knight

GENERAL VOCABULARY

sedge	grasses in the wetland
granary	a store

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
    Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake,
    And no birds sing.

Oh what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
    So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
    And the harvest's done.

▶

Oh what can ail thee, knight-at-arms(1, 5) Alone and palely loitering?(2, 46) Repeated questions, repetition and old-fashioned language are typical of ballads.

Alone and palely loitering(2, 46) Alliteration throughout the poem acts to emphasise the sinister tone, and the sing-song quality when read.

harvest's done(8) full beautiful(14) The harvest is over and life is fading; in contrast, the fairy is 'full beautiful' and blooming.

fading rose(11) The rose, a symbol of beauty, contrasts with the lily, which is associated with death.

withered(3) fading rose(11) death-pale(38) Examples of words relating to death or dying used throughout to create a chilling tone.

wild wild eyes(31) a faery's song(24) Links between the 'strangeness' and 'wildness' of the fairy.

death-pale(38) The lack of colour and vibrancy is linked to the absence of bird song and the dying away of the seasons.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbol in literature, people, objects or events that have a meaning other than their literal meaning

GENERAL VOCABULARY

zone	belt
steed	horse
manna	food from heaven
gloam	twilight
sojourn	remain

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful — a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna-dew,
And sure in language strange she said —
'I love thee true'.

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept and sighed full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lullèd me asleep
And there I dreamed — Ah! woe betide! —
The latest dream I ever dreamt
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried — 'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!'

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

tetrameter	a line of poetry containing four pairs of beats or eight syllables
narrator	a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film
symbolism	using symbols to represent particular concepts or ideas

FORM

'La Belle Dame sans Merci' is structured in 12 quatrains, using a simple rhyme scheme of ABCB. The poem is a folk ballad, which is a form of poetry written to be performed aloud; the simple vocabulary and rhyme scheme to help a performer remember the words.The first three lines of each quatrain are in iambic tetrameter, with a shorter final line. This reflects the unsettling tone of the poem, and makes each quatrain end abruptly. It takes the form of dialogue between Keats's two different narrators, who address each other directly. In the first two quatrains, the narrator is an unknown person who directly address the night. From the third quatrain until the end of the poem, the knight recounts his story to the first narrator.

CONTENT

'La Belle Dame sans Merci' (literally 'the beautiful woman without mercy') tells the story of a knight that falls in love with a beautiful and mysterious woman who seduces him into a magical realm. She lulls him to sleep and he wakes up alone. The ending is ambiguous and leaves the story unresolved: the reader does not know whether the knight survives, or whether he is doomed to become one of the 'Pale warriors' he sees in his dream.

The poem explores themes such as death, love, memory and sex. Keats quickly establishes an ominous tone, using sensory language to set the scene. There is an eerie silence ('no birds sing'), images alluding to death ('the sedge has withered from the lake') and a vulnerable figure on his own ('Alone and palely loitering', 'haggard'). This creates a sense of foreboding, making the reader fear for the knight's safety. The poem is rich with symbolism and Keats uses references to nature for several different purposes: 'a lily on thy brow' has connotations of death, as the lily is commonly regarded as a symbol of death. The third quatrain features a second reference to a flower: 'And on thy cheek a fading rose'. Like the lily, the rose is used to show the paleness of the knight's skin – the colour is quickly draining from the knight's cheeks. The rose is another common symbol in literature and has previously been used to represent love, beauty and sometimes passion. That the rose is withering may represent the knight's fading feelings for the woman or that life is draining from him. The knight and woman may also be seen as symbols. At the time of writing, Keats was suffering from tuberculosis – which would ultimately kill him – and he would have been aware of the severity of his condition. The sickly knight may represent him, and the beautiful woman may be a symbol of death; she is without mercy because everyone must die eventually.

A02

SKILLS ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

GENERAL VOCABULARY

enslaved	to make someone a slave
archaic	old-fashioned

ACTIVITY 1

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show the character of the knight or the fairy visitor and how he is enslaved by her ('in thrall')
- focus on features of the archaic use of language of Keats and its effect in creating a strange age in the past
- be words that seem striking or unusual to you, and that convey the poet's ideas about love and death.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

desolation a state of complete emptiness or destruction

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'I saw their starved lips in the gloam / With horrid warning gapèd wide'	This haunting image presumably refers to the open mouth of a corpse or skeleton.
'And no birds sing.'	This ending to the poem creates a sense of complete desolation and death. The sound of birds is such a universal, natural occurrence that their absence creates a chilling atmosphere. It was commented on, for example, by soldiers in the battlegrounds of the First World War.
'She found me roots of relish sweet / And honey wild'	The unusual food suggests that he is being put under her spell; she seems to have magic power over him.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

The main theme is that of love, which connects the poem with others in the collection, although the treatment of love is very different from the others. There is also a strong connection with death, which again connects it with some poems in the collection.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **There is a mystery about this strange lady who appears. What does the reader find out about her and why does her appearance to the knight have such a powerful effect on him?**
- **The knight admits that he had received warnings about the lady, but he does not seem to have paid attention. Why is this?**
- **How do the structure and form of the poem contribute to its effect?**
- **Many aspects of the poem seem mysterious and readers have disagreed over how to interpret it. Comment on what the poem means to you.**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and 'My Last Duchess'.

Show how romantic love is presented as destructive in 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and 'My Last Duchess'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'.

How does the presentation of the lady in 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' compare to the presentation of a significant person in one other poem in the Anthology?

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

'POEM AT THIRTY-NINE'
ALICE WALKER

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Alice Walker is an African-American writer, born in 1944. Her poems and novels about her family background in particular have been greatly admired. The best known of her works is the novel *The Color Purple*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1983 (the year when she was 39 years old, seven years after her father's death). This book was made into a very successful film. In the 1960s, she was linked to the civil rights movement in the United States, with its charismatic leader Martin Luther King.

Martin Luther King

GENERAL VOCABULARY

leader the person who directs or controls a group, organisation or country.

How I miss my father(1, 27) He taught me(8, 20) Repetition highlights the main focus of the poem.

Writing deposit slips and checks(6) form(9) bits of paper(13) savings account(18–19) writing(44) Words relating to writing and accounts are used throughout.

high school(17) Because her father had had little education, he was determined that education would be the way out of poverty for Alice.

How I miss my father.
I wish he had not been
so tired
when I was
born.

Writing deposit slips and checks
I think of him.
He taught me how.
This is the form,
he must have said:
the way it is done.

I learned to see
bits of paper
as a way
to escape
the life he knew
and even in high school
had a savings
account.

He taught me
that telling the truth
did not always mean
a beating;
though many of my truths
must have grieved him
before the end.

How I miss my father!

He cooked like a person
dancing
in a yoga meditation
and craved the voluptuous
sharing
of good food.

Now I look and cook just like him:
my brain light;
tossing this and that
into the pot;
seasoning none of my life
the same way twice; happy to feed
whoever strays my way.

He would have grown
to admire
the woman I've become:
cooking, writing, chopping wood,
staring into the fire.

cooked(28) good food(33) pot(37) seasoning(38) Words that refer to cookery.

like a person / dancing / in a yoga meditation(28–30) This simile suggests that her father was both excited and at the same time completely absorbed in what he was doing when he cooked.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

FORM

'Poem at Thirty-Nine' is written in free verse and structured in seven irregular stanzas. Through repetition of a phrase, the poem is split into two distinct sections: the first section includes stanzas one to four; the second section from stanza five to seven. The style is conversational, with simple vocabulary and no rhyme scheme or formal metre.

Walker frequently uses enjambment to isolate and emphasise words and phrases. By using long sentences that run across several short lines, she communicates the fragmented and yet flowing nature of memory.

CONTENT

The poem describes a series of memories of the poet's dead father, working from her birth through to the present day. It begins in a plaintive tone, expressing regret at how hard her father had to work ('I wish he had not been / so tired / when I was / born'). The focus on saving money ('even in high school / I had a savings / account') suggests that they had little. As well as the practical skill of saving money, the poem shows that he taught her principles, such as being honest: 'He taught me / that telling the truth / did not always mean / a beating'. This implies both that her father taught her to be truthful even in the face of adversity – a reference to Walker's civil rights campaigning – while also suggesting that he was physically abusive. That it did not 'always' result in a beating implies that it sometimes did, and 'many of my truths / must have grieved him' suggests that her father was regularly abusive. Walker's writing communicates a lot on a sub-textual level, with passages having greater meaning than they may initially appear to.

Repetition of the opening line ('How I miss my father') marks a tonal shift and the beginning of the second section, which explores more positive memories and similarities between the poet and her father. In the second instance, the phrase is punctuated with an exclamation mark rather than a full stop, giving a stronger sense that she truly misses him. The sixth stanza explains that she not only looks like him, but she has inherited his sense of adventure ('seasoning none of my life / the same way twice'). The final stanza asserts the poet's belief that her father would be proud of the woman she has become.

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show aspects of her personality and relationship with her father
- focus on features of Walker's language and its effect
- pick out the effect of words that seem striking and convey Walker's ideas.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'How I miss my father'	This line, which is repeated for emphasis, expresses clearly and simply the idea running through the poem. It is stated without extra words and this makes the feelings all the more powerful.
'cooked like a person / dancing / in a yoga meditation'	This is an unusual simile, with the one-word line 'dancing' a surprising word in the context; however, this is no ordinary dancing: people in yoga meditations are often completely still.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

The main theme explored in this poem is the parent and child relationship, in this case the daughter's very personal memory of her growing up and learning from her father. Other relationships are focused on in several poems, but perhaps the poem that links most naturally with this one is Dylan Thomas's poem, 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night', addressed to his own father.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ **Why do you think Alice Walker chose this particular title? Does the age 39 have some significance, perhaps?**
- ▶ **Discuss the ideas of writing, accounts and cooking; think about what the method of cooking tells you about her and her father's attitudes to life.**
- ▶ **What do you learn about the relationship between the writer and her father? What signs can you find of problems in their lives and what did she learn from him?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'Poem at Thirty-Nine' and'Half-past Two'.

Show how everyday events are made to appear significant in 'Poem at Thirty-Nine' and 'Half-past Two'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read'Poem at Thirty-Nine'.

How is childhood presented in 'Poem at Thirty-Nine' and one other poem in the Anthology?

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

'WAR PHOTOGRAPHER'
CAROL ANN DUFFY

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Carol Ann Duffy was born in 1955 and is one of Britain's most celebrated poets. She became the first female Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom in 2009: this is an honorary position that has been held by many famous poets over the years. A close friend of Duffy's was Don McCullin, one of the best known of all war photographers. His pictures have created some powerful images of the suffering that war can cause.

▲ The war photographer, Don McCullin

In his darkroom he is finally alone
with spools of suffering set out in ordered rows.
The only light is red and softly glows,
as though this were a church and he
a priest preparing to intone a **Mass**.
Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh. All flesh is grass.

He has a job to do. Solutions slop in trays
beneath his hands, which did not tremble then
though seem to now. Rural England. Home again
to ordinary pain which simple weather can dispel,
to fields which don't explode beneath the feet
of running children in a nightmare heat.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

Mass a religious service

darkroom(1) red(3) black-and-white(19) Words linked to colour; red is particularly striking in relation to black and white photography.

he(1) 'He' is often repeated, creating a sense of identity and ownership.

as though this were a church(4) A simile creating religious comparisons.

Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh.(6) These are all capital cities that have suffered greatly from the effects of war.

All flesh is grass(6) Words from the Bible making a link to the previous line.

running children in a nightmare heat(12) There are famous photos from the Vietnam War showing such scenes.

foreign dust(18) This phrase echoes the famous war poem by Rupert Brooke, 'The Soldier': 'a corner of some foreign field that is for ever England'.

black-and-white(19) Black-and-white photographs are often thought to be the most powerful for images of war; the phrase is also used to mean 'with no room for doubt; clear-cut'.

Something is happening. A stranger's features
faintly start to twist before his eyes,
a half-formed ghost. He remembers the cries
of this man's wife, how he sought approval
without words to do what someone must
and how the blood stained into foreign dust.

A hundred agonies in black-and-white
from which his editor will pick out five or six
for **Sunday's supplement**. The reader's eyeballs prick
with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers.
From the aeroplane he stares **impassively** at where
he earns his living and they do not care.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

GENERAL VOCABULARY

Sunday's supplement	a regular additional magazine section placed in a Sunday newspaper
impassively	without feeling
darkroom	a special room with only red light or no light, where film from a camera is made into photographs

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbolic	where a person, object or event is used by a writer to convey a meaning beyond its literal meaning

FORM

'War Photographer' is written in four six-line stanzas, each ending with a rhyming couplet. The neat structure is in contrast to the disorder seen in the images described. The poem is narrated from the third-person perspective with a blunt and to-the-point style. Combined with the use of enjambment, the poem bears a resemblance to a newspaper article. As in an article, lines do not begin with a capital letter, except where they are also the beginning of a new sentence.

CONTENT

Much of Duffy's poem explores contrast and balance. The peaceful **darkroom** described in the opening stanza is contrasted with the disturbing images that the photographer develops, while there is a literal example of contrast in the fourth stanza ('black-and-white'). The photographer's role, it is suggested, is to restore balance to disorder, as he places the spools 'in ordered rows'. Duffy juxtaposes the reactions of the war photographer and the newspaper readers, referring to their eyes to show the differences ('the reader's eyeballs prick / with tears', 'he stares impassively'). The photographer's passive response is mirrored in the matter-of-fact writing style, as well as showing that his job is to document. It may also suggest that he has become desensitized to the horrors of war. However, the use of 'stares' implies that he is giving the subject time and attention, whereas the readers only manage to look fleetingly 'between the bath and pre-lunch beers'. There is also a contrast drawn between the photographer's 'impassive' reaction when he was taking pictures in the war zone, where his hands 'did not tremble,' but they 'seem to' in the darkroom. In fact, his development of the photographs is **symbolic**: as he processes the pictures, he also processes his feelings. His physical reaction after the event shows the extent to which he has been affected and suggests that he may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It brings to mind the poetry of the World War I which frequently explored the physical and emotional impact that war had on soldiers. There is significant focus on sensory language and sight in particular ('the only light is red and softly glows', 'agonies in black-and-white') reflecting the photographer's focus on the visual. There are also references to sound, specifically the onomatopoeic 'slop' of the development fluid and the cries of an injured woman that the photographer remembers while developing a photograph of her husband. These devices help the reader empathise with the war photographer.

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show how Duffy portrays the scene in the darkroom
- focus on features of her language and its effect in creating powerful and disturbing images
- pick out the effect of words that seem striking or unusual to you and that convey Duffy's ideas about the work of the photographer or about your reactions to human suffering.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'between the bath and pre-lunch beers'	This phrase gives the idea that people in England have a set routine on Sunday morning (despite the first stanza, going to church does not seem to come into it).
'Solutions slop in trays'	Through the use of alliteration and the onomatopoeic 'slop', you can hear the sound of the liquid used to develop the photos.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

The theme of war is central, of course, but there is also the subject of human suffering and how different people respond to it. The poem also makes a strong comment on people's attitudes and uses contrasts and religious imagery.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **How does a photograph compare with a 'picture' in words?**
- **How do you think the editor chooses five or six pictures from all those he has taken? What do you think they are looking for?**
- **How well do you feel that you understand the thoughts and feelings (or lack of them) shown by the photographer?**
- **What do you think that the overall message of the poem is? What does Duffy want you to feel about her subject?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'War Photographer' and 'My Last Duchess'.

Compare the guilt of the photographer in 'War Photographer' to the guilt of the narrator in 'My Last Duchess'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read 'War Photographer'.

How do the poets present suffering in 'War Photographer' and one other poem in the Anthology?

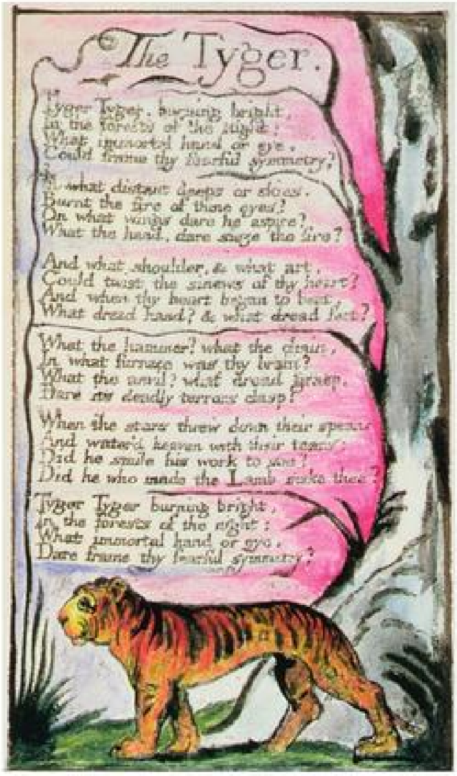
You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

'THE TYGER'
WILLIAM BLAKE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

William Blake was born in London in 1757 and died in 1827, spending most of his life in London, which was the subject of some of his writing. He was an unusual individual and a talented artist. He produced two sets of poems that presented strong contrasts: *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. *Songs of Innocence* include one of his best-loved poems, 'The Lamb', and they show the wonder of childhood. In *Songs of Experience*, childhood has turned into a more suspicious and fearful adulthood. 'The Tyger' is very different from 'The Lamb', which Blake actually makes reference to in the final line of the fifth stanza of 'The Tyger'.



▲ William Blake's original print of 'The Tyger'

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? And what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Tyger, Tyger(1) Repetition features throughout the poem to create strong visual images.

burning bright(1) Alliteration features throughout to create a strong, memorable rhythm when read aloud.

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?(4) The poem has a lot of questions; they are addressed, strictly speaking, to the tiger, but may be seen as rhetorical, as no answer is expected.

What the hammer? what the chain, / In what furnace was thy brain? / What the anvil?(13-15) Industrial language is used to create a sense of fear and uncertainty.

he(20) This refers to God.

Tyger, Tyger(21) The final stanza is a repetition of the first, but with one change; consider why Blake may have done this.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

GENERAL VOCABULARY

tyger an old-fashioned spelling of 'tiger'

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

trochaic using a heavy, stressed beat followed by a light, unstressed one: *tum*-te (this pair of beats is called a trochee)
narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film
symbol in literature, people, objects or events that have a meaning other than their literal meaning

FORM

'The Tyger' features six quatrains and a simple AABBCCDD rhyme scheme (meaning it is written in rhyming couplets). It follows a largely trochaic metre and has a third person narrator who appears to address the tiger directly.

CONTENT

Unlike many of the poems you have looked at in this section, 'The Tyger' does not tell a story. Rather, it appears to pose some grand questions about religion. Bear in mind that there are many possible interpretations of the poem. For this reason, it can be quite intimidating! The addressee, the tiger, can be seen as a symbol of the devil, or the personification of evil – at once both fascinating and terrifying. This is supported by references to fire ('burning bright', 'burnt the fire of thine eyes') which may refer to hellfire, and 'wings' which may refer to Lucifer, the fallen angel. With this reading, the questions in the first and last stanzas take on a different meaning: how could an all-powerful and benevolent God create evil or impose evil on the world? Alternatively, you could argue that the tiger is a symbol of God – in which case, the question 'What immortal hand or eye / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?' becomes an age-old question about who created God. The uncertainty felt by the reader in trying to grasp the meaning of the poem is a reflection of the narrator's inability to grasp the many questions he or she asks. As with another poem in this section, 'Half-Caste' by John Agard, the numerous questions posed by the narrator invite the reader to asks the same questions. It seems that Blake is asking his readers to consider either the origin of God, or at least the nature of God.

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show the process of creating the tiger
- focus on features of Blake's language and its effect, such as the use of repetition, questions and alliteration
- pick out the effect of striking or unusual words to describe the tiger.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'began to beat'	The alliteration seems effective here because the 'b' represents the sound of the beating of the heart.
'What dread hand? And what dread feet?'	The repetition in these two short questions shows that the different parts of the creator's body are thought of as producing a feeling of fear and dread.
'burning bright / In the forests of the night'	The tiger is shown to be a fiery figure shining through the forests, which are seen as dark.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

The subject matter of 'The Tyger' is very different from most poems in this section of the Anthology. However, there are other poems that deal with the themes of creation, power and strength, and that describe violent actions. Use these ideas as a basis for making links between poems.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **How does Blake bring out the idea that creating the tiger must have been a very difficult process?**
- **What is the effect of the use of language from industry? (This was the time of the Industrial Revolution in Britain.)**
- **Read the poem 'The Lamb' from *Songs of Innocence*, which was paired by Blake with 'The Tyger', and compare the two poems.**
- **Think about the strong trochaic rhythm and the regular rhyme scheme in the poem. How do these help to create the effect of the poem?**
- **You have seen how Blake asks a large number of questions in the poem. What do you feel this questioning tone adds to the sense of the poem?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'The Tyger' and 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'.

Compare the presentation of nature in 'The Tyger' and 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read 'The Tyger'.

Explore how the poets produce powerful language in 'The Tyger' and one other poem in the Anthology.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

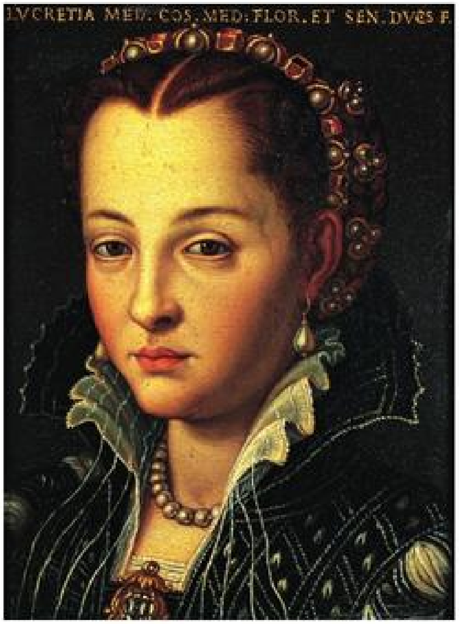
Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

A wild tiger

‘MY LAST DUCHESS’
ROBERT BROWNING

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Robert Browning was born in London in 1812 and died in 1889. Many of his poems were on the theme of love, but if readers expect ‘My Last Duchess’ to be a conventional love story, they are in for a surprise. Browning started writing poetry when very young, but his early efforts did not find a publisher. His many poems include the famous narrative poem ‘The Pied Piper of Hamelin’ and many of his poems, including ‘My Last Duchess’, are dramatic monologues in which one person talks to another. He was married to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who was herself a famous writer. They lived for a long time in Italy, where ‘My Last Duchess’ is set, and Browning died in his son’s home in Venice.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▲ A painting of Lucrezia de’ Medici, the inspiration for Robert Browning’s ‘My Last Duchess’

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

dramatic monologue where a single person (first-person narrator) tells the events, especially in a poem, either to a single listener or to the reader

That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf’s hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will’t please you sit and look at her? I said
‘Frà Pandolf’ by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, ’twas not
Her husband’s presence only, called that spot
of joy into the Duchess’ cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say ‘Her mantle laps
Over my lady’s wrist too much,’ or ‘Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat’: such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart — how shall I say? — too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, ’twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool

Duchess(1, 15) Repetition used to establish a sense of social standing.

I call / That piece a wonder, now (2–3) This enjambment and the caesura or pause, at the colon disrupts the metre and makes this line feel jarring; also conversational and irregular like everyday speech.

Frà Pandolf’s(3) Probably not a real painter; ‘Fra’ suggests a Friar in the Catholic Church.

that spot / of joy(14–15) Note how the Duke describes the colour on her face in the painting and as she was in real life; what does he think about this colour?

looked on(24) What might the Duke be trying to say here about what the Duchess ‘looked on’?

favour(25) A gift, such as a jewel, perhaps.

nine-hundred-years-old name(33) Notice the Duke's pride in his long family history.

stoop(34, 42, 43) smile(43, 45, 46) Repetition draws attention to these acts.

stooping(42) He will never 'stoop'; he expects her always to bend to his will and defer to him: it has to be that way round. This is perhaps her worst 'offence'.

Neptune(54) The Roman god of the sea; does the Duke see himself as a god, taming his wives?

Claus of Innsbruck(56) Probably not a real sculptor; the name is meant to sound impressive.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

forsooth in truth

Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace — all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men, — good! but thanked
Somehow — I know not how — as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech — (which I have not) — to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark' — and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, **forsooth**, and made excuse,
E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

FORM

'My Last Duchess' is a dramatic monologue written in iambic pentameter and structured as a long speech. Browning uses a conversational tone and varied punctuation to reflect this. It is written in rhyming couplets, but the rhyme scheme is masked by Browning's extensive use of enjambment. While a rhyme would ordinarily give a poem a sense of rhythm, the rhyming words are often in the middle of a sentence, meaning the stress of the rhyme would be in conflict with the rhythm of the sentence.

CONTENT

The characters in the poem are based on real people. The speaker is Alfonso II d'Este, the fifth Duke of the Italian city of Ferrara, and he is speaking to a representative from the Count of Tyrol. The 'last Duchess' is the daughter of Cosimo I de' Medici, Lucrezia de' Medici. The Medicis were a powerful rich family, but lacked a 'nine-hundred-years-old name'. The poem is set in the period between 1561 (when Lucrezia died) and 1565 (the Duke's second marriage).

Browning's poem explores themes including status, wealth and morality and is an interesting study of perspective. In spite of his privilege, the Duke's behaviour is far from gentlemanly. He is boastful and proud of his material possessions, pointing them out to the emissary and highlighting their rarity by name-dropping the artists that created them ('Notice Neptune, though, / Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity, / Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!'). He states that his late wife should have been more grateful to him for marrying her ('as if she ranked / My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name / With anybody's gift') and depicts her as undiscerning ('Too easily impressed'). Repetition of the verbs 'look' and 'smile', as well as the use of 'blush', show the Duke's view that the Duchess as immature and naïve – someone that gets by on her smile and charm because she does not truly understand what is happening around her and too foolish to appreciate what the Duke has given her. But you must remember that everything in the poem is the Duke's point of view and a poem covering their marriage from the Duchess' perspective would likely be very different.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

While you only see the Duchess from the Duke's perspective, Browning includes enough information that the reader can see that perhaps the Duchess was actually less materialistic than the Duke and actually being well-mannered in accepting all gifts with the same gratitude. The Duke's snobbery, arrogance and shallow nature make the reader unsympathetic towards him, and even dislike and distrust him – as well as pitying the Duchess for having to put up with him! It is important to remember that any narrator can be considered unreliable, because everyone has their own bias. A close analysis of the seemingly simple title communicates many of the ideas explored in the poem. 'My' indicates ownership, while referring to his former wife as 'Duchess', her title, rather than 'my last wife' reflects that the Duke is more concerned with titles and status than love.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

archaic old-fashioned

ACTIVITY 1 A02

SKILLS ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show aspects of the Duke's character or give his views about the 'last Duchess'
- focus on features of Browning's language and its effect, including his use of archaic words or phrases
- pick out the effect of words that seem striking or unusual to you and that show Browning's ideas about his characters effectively.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'a nine-hundred-years-old name'	This shows how much importance the Duke puts on coming from a long-established family, which he thinks the Duchess needed to respect much more, compared with everyone else.
'I gave commands'	This phrase seems deliberately vague: the reader does not know who he gave the commands to, but it does sound threatening, especially with the pause after it.

'The Count your master's known munificence…'	The language here seems very pretentious and formal, emphasising that he is thinking of this marriage entirely as a business contract.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

This is a poem that focuses on the marriage of a Duke and a Duchess and on the theme of marriage more generally: the Duke now wants to arrange another marriage to the Count's daughter. There is reference to the idea of men seeing women as objects or possessions. It also explores a number of aspects of character, in this case the ideas of jealousy, selfishness and pride. You may be able to compare the way Browning uses the dramatic monologue form with other poems from Section C of the Anthology.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

enjambment the interruption of a sentence by the ending of a line, often producing a shocking and striking effect; for example, in 'Poem at Thirty-Nine': 'I wish he had not been / so tired / when I was / born'

end-stopped a line ending in a definite punctuation mark

- **What is the effect on the reader of the opening line? Does it suggest that the Duke had warm feelings towards the Duchess?**
- **It is said that part of Browning's skill is to make the Duke reveal much more about himself than he intends. Can you find places in the poem where this happens?**
- **What do you notice about the tone of the last ten lines of the poem (47–56)? What is the effect of the ending?**
- **Look at the ways Browning uses the rhyme (rhyming couplets) and rhythm (iambic pentameter). Consider also how he uses enjambment in this poem, with very few end-stopped lines. (You can see this immediately in the lack of punctuation at the end of most lines, which flow into each other.)**
- **Do you think that Browning wanted you to believe that the Duke had his wife murdered? Find evidence for your view.**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'My Last Duchess' and 'Sonnet 116'.

Compare the presentation of romantic relationships 'My Last Duchess' and 'Sonnet 116'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read 'My Last Duchess'.

Compare the presentation of evil in 'My Last Duchess' and one other poem in the Anthology.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

DID YOU KNOW?

A term from colonial history, 'half-caste' is now considered to be an offensive term used to describe someone whose parents are of different races.

'HALF-CASTE'
JOHN AGARD

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

John Agard is a poet, playwright and writer of short stories. He was born in 1949 in the South American country of Guyana, which was then part of the British Empire. He moved to England in 1977, and has since published numerous collections of poetry and won many literary awards. The poem 'Half-Caste' is from a collection with the same title that was first published in 2005. As well as being well-known in its written form, the poem is notable for Agard's powerful public readings and performances of it. It deals with one of the central themes of his writing: the condition of being mixed race (his father was Caribbean and his mother Portuguese), as well as living as a non-native in Britain.

Excuse me(1) Explain yuself(4, 10, 23, 31) I will tell yu(51) Some examples of the use of direct address to the reader.

yu mean when Picasso / mix red an green / is a half-caste canvas?(7–9) Use of analogy (comparison) to highlight the stupidity of the term 'half-caste'; other examples on lines 13–15 and 26–30.

dem overcast / so spiteful dem don't want de sun pass(20–21) One example of the author's use of humour.

Excuse me
standing on one leg
I'm half-caste.

Explain yuself
wha yu mean
when yu say half-caste
yu mean when Picasso
mix red an green
is a half-caste canvas?
explain yuself
wha yu mean
when yu say half-caste
yu mean when light an shadow
mix in de sky
is a half-caste weather?
well in dat case
england weather
nearly always half-caste
in fact some o dem cloud
half-caste till dem overcast
so spiteful dem don't want de sun pass
ah rass?

▲ John Agard

explain yuself
wha yu mean
when yu say half-caste
yu mean tchaikovsky
sit down at dah piano
an mix a black key
wid a white key
is a half-caste symphony?

Explain yuself
wha yu mean
Ah listening to yu wid de keen
half of mih ear
Ah looking at yu wid de keen
half of mih eye
an when I'm introduced to yu
I'm sure you'll understand
why I offer yu half-a-hand
an when I sleep at night
I close half-a-eye
consequently when I dream
I dream half-a-dream
an when moon begin to glow
I half-caste human being
cast half-a-shadow
but yu must come back tomorrow
wid de whole of yu eye
an de whole of yu ear
an de whole of yu mind.

an I will tell yu
de other half
of my story.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

FORM

The structure of the poem essentially sees it broken into two sections. The first sarcastically asks for an explanation of what the reader means when they say 'half-caste'. A split then occurs at 'Ah listening to you', and from here the rest of the poem turns to focus on the poet himself and the idea that he is half-caste and what that means to him.

By splitting the structure in this way, Agard is again able to reinforce the idea of being half-caste, as the poem is literally split in two. It also helps to create the feeling that the poet is conducting an argument with the reader through the poem. In the first half he demolishes what the reader means by using the term 'half-caste', and in the second half he attacks the reader for lacking the vision to see or know him properly.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

colloquial slang or informal language

Like many of Agard's poems, 'Half-Caste' is not written in Standard English. Instead, it uses a colloquial speech pattern which reproduces the sounds and rhythms of a Caribbean dialect. This has a number of effects within the poem. Firstly, it creates the sense of the poem as something that is primarily spoken rather than written. The reader can feel Agard's voice strongly, which reinforces the sense that a direct address is being made to the reader. Indeed, Agard is a performance poet and often reads his works, including 'Half-Caste', aloud in front of audiences. Secondly, it supports the idea of being 'half caste' by producing a sort of half-caste effect within the language, which is split between England and the Caribbean.

▲ Piano keys are one of the images Agard uses.

CONTENT

Much of the poem is based on analogies which compare the image of being 'half-caste' to other images and ideas. In the first section Agard compares being half-caste to a Picasso painting which mixes different colours, the English weather which often mixes sun and cloud together, and a symphony by Tchaikovsky which uses both black and white piano keys.

These comparisons have been carefully chosen for specific reasons. By comparing the idea of being half-caste to the English weather, Agard relates it to something very familiar and central to English identity. This has the effect of moving away from the view of half-caste being something unfamiliar and alien, while also suggesting that if it is alien it is an alienness which is equally at the heart of English culture.

The first and last analogies introduce into the poem the idea of great art produced by figures who are traditionally thought of as great artists – Picasso and Tchaikovsky. This creates the sense of Agard challenging the idea of what counts as great and important art, and trying to force his own 'half-caste' identity into this category.

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show how Agard ridicules the idea phrase 'half-caste'
- focus on features of his language and its effect, such as the use of colloquial speech, repetiti1on and questions
- pick out the effect of words that seem striking or unusual to you and that convey Agard's ideas.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'when I dream / I dream half-a-dream'	By suggesting the phrase 'half-caste' means half a person, Agard lists examples of normal human behaviour that are only half complete. This use of humour makes the idea of someone being 'half-caste' seem ridiculous and something to laugh at.

'explain yuself / wha yu mean / when yu say half-caste'	Repetition of this imperative tells the reader to give a logical explanation for the phrase 'half-caste' – and of course there isn't one! It is a simple but clever way of making the reader question something, by literally asking them a question.
'mix a black key / wid a white key / is a half-caste symphony'	The use of black and white mirrors the idea of mixing colours. The result of the mix is a beautiful piece of art.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

'Half-Caste' is a poem which focuses on the experience of being an outsider. It is also about the relationship between British culture and other cultures, in particular the cultures of countries which have been colonised by Britain in the past. It involves an inventive and informal use of language which does not conform to the rules which govern Standard English. In addition, it is heavily based on the use of powerful analogies and comparisons, and the sense of a direct address being made to the reader. All of these features provide strong potential links with other poems.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **Think about the opening words of the poem, 'Excuse me'. On the surface this sounds like a polite and humble request, but this doesn't really seem to fit with the confrontational feel of the rest of the poem. Are there any other ways of interpreting this statement which fit better with the poem as a whole? Why does Agard choose to open the poem in this way?**
- **In the second stanza Agard makes a joke about the English weather, stating that it is 'nearly always half-caste'. What are the effects of his choice to use humour here? How does it affect the overall feeling of the poem?**
- **What is the significance of the poem's form, which uses irregular verses of seemingly random lengths and very short lines without rhyme or a consistent rhythmical pattern?**
- **What do you think the poet means when he ends the poem by stating 'I will tell yu / de other half / of my story'? What is the 'other half' of his story, and what does he mean when he says that the reader must return with the whole of their eye, ear and mind?**
- **What does it suggest about the identity of the speaker when they say that they only 'dream half-a-dream' and only 'cast half-a-shadow'?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'Half-Caste' and 'Prayer Before Birth'.

Compare the way the reader is directly addressed in 'Half-Caste' and 'Prayer Before Birth'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read 'Half-Caste'.

How do the poets make use of unconventional language in 'Half-Caste' and one other poem from the Anthology?

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

'DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT'
DYLAN THOMAS

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Dylan Thomas was born in Swansea, South Wales in 1914, just after the start of the First World War, and died in New York, in November 1953, aged just 39. He was buried in Wales. Although he is considered a great Welsh poet, he wrote almost all of his works in English; he had a love of words and sounds, and wrote in a very musical way, enjoying such devices as rhythm, alliteration and assonance.

▲ A young Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Do not go gentle into that good night(1, 6, 12, 18) Repetition conveys a sense of anger and reinforces this message.

burn and rave(2) Old age is personified.

Rage, rage against the dying(3) Alliteration throughout results in a song-like quality when read aloud.

words had forked no lightning(5) The wise men may feel that they have not said or written things that have a dramatic impact, but they should not abandon hope of doing so.

flight(10) way(11) night(12) Following an ABA rhyme scheme gives the poem a very musical feel.

Grave men(13) Notice the pun here: men who are serious and are going to the grave.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

pun an amusing use of a word or phrase that has two meanings, or of words that have the same sound but different meanings

narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

FORM

This poem is a villanelle, a form that always has nineteen lines, with a fixed rhythm using iambic pentameter. There are five groups of three lines (tercets) with a final quatrain (four lines – an extra line after the sixth tercet, which rhymes with the previous line). The first and third lines of the first stanza are used as refrains throughout the poem, used alternately as the last line of the tercets.

The rhyme scheme of the first five stanzas is ABA, while the quatrain has a rhyme scheme of ABAA with the two refrains becoming a rhyming couplet as the last lines of the poem. Note that the rhyme pattern is based on the idea of alternating night and day. The fixed rhythm, rhyme scheme and use of refrains give the poem a song-like quality (the word 'vilanelle' derives from the Italian word 'villanella', which is a kind of song).

CONTENT

When Dylan Thomas's father was in his eighties, he became blind and weak. The reader can assume that the narrator of the poem – on this occasion – is the poet himself, who is trying to persuade him to remain strong and fight against death, keeping an energetic hold on life. However, it is not clear until the final stanza that the poet is directly addressing his father and the reader may naturally assume that the poem is a more general address, with stanzas two to five beginning with references to a different group of people ('wise men', 'Good men', 'Wild men', etc). Thomas uses 'light' and 'dark' to represent, respectively, life and death. Throughout the poem, his choice of vocabulary links to this simple symbolism, with frequent use of words which are related to light ('lightning', 'sun', 'blaze'). In every stanza, the poet uses an imperative – the two refrains ('Do not go gentle into that good night' and 'Rage, rage against the dying of the light') – to command his father to fight death. Repetition of these lines makes them memorable and adds emphasis and gives the effect that they are a desperate plea. To make this even more evocative, Thomas uses violent, stressed, monosyllabic words ('forked', 'burn', 'fierce').

ACTIVITY 1 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- be taken from the repeated lines, analysing the effect of the repetition
- focus on features of Thomas's language and its effect in presenting his 'advice' to his dying father
- pick out the effect of words that seem to you striking or unusual and that convey Thomas's ideas about approaching death.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'Blind eyes could blaze like meteors'	This is a striking simile because normally you would not expect blind eyes to be 'fiery' in this way: 'meteors' suggest objects that have a really powerful impact.
'there on the sad height'	His father is placed by Thomas in a high place, perhaps his deathbed, showing him being separated from the world of the living. Note that it is the poet who is sad, not the place where his father is dying.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

The main themes of the poem are the approach of death and the father-son relationship; there are other poems in the collection that have clear thematic links to this. Some of the poet's emotions, for example, anger and defiance, may also suggest connections with other poems. You may feel that the attitude to death in Thomas's poem is very different from others in the collection.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ **Why does the writer think that people should fight against the approach of death? Is it that he does not want to lose his father or are there other reasons for his attitude to life and death?**
- ▶ **How do the different forms of imagery, including personification and metaphor, add to the presentation of the ideas in the poem?**
- ▶ **In what ways do the very set form and structure of the poem contribute to its effect on the reader? (Think especially of rhyme, rhythm and use of repetition.)**
- ▶ **Look carefully at the tone of the poem. How does this help your understanding of the poet's feelings?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night' and 'Poem at Thirty-Nine'.

Compare the presentation of a parent's death in 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night' and 'Poem at Thirty-Nine'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night'.

How do the poets present death in 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night' and one other poem in the Anthology?

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

‘REMEMBER’
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Christina Rossetti was born in London in 1830 and died in 1894. She was part of a family of writers and artists, the best-known being her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who was a leading figure of the Pre-Raphaelites. She suffered frequently from illnesses, including depression. The poem ‘Remember’ suggests that she wrote it when she was convinced she was about to die. However, she lived for many years after the poem was written in 1849 and after its publication in the collection *Goblin Market* in 1862. She never married, but she was engaged. She broke off the engagement when her fiancé, James Collinson, became a Catholic. It is not known for sure if the poem is addressed to Collinson, but many people believe him to be the most likely person, as there are references to plans for a future life together.

▲ A veiled statue

Remember me when I am gone away,
 Gone far away into the silent land;
 When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
 You tell me of our future that you planned:
 Only remember me; you understand

Remember(1) Words associated with memory and time are repeated throughout, bringing focus to these themes.

silent land(2) A metaphor for death.

When you can no more hold me by the hand, / Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay. (3-4) Emphasis is drawn to this passage through alliteration.

you planned(6) Notice the wording ‘that you planned’, not ‘that we planned’.

It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A **vestige** of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

late(8) It will be too late then for him to give her advice.

Yet(9) The start of the sestet.

remember(14) Why might remembering make her lover sad?

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

GENERAL VOCABULARY

vestige literally, a footprint: a definite trace

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sonnet a 14-line poem with a formal structure, consisting of a set pattern of lines; the Shakespearian sonnet contains three quatrains and a couplet (four and two lines respectively); the Petrarchan sonnet contains an octave and a sestet (eight and six lines respectively)

FORM

This is a Petrarchan or Italian **sonnet**, rather than the Shakespearean sonnet, which you have met in studying 'Sonnet 116'. Both types of sonnet contain 14 lines and use the iambic pentameter rhythm.

'Remember' has an eight-line section (the 'octave') followed by a six-line section (the 'sestet'). It does not have any rhyming couplets, but there is a carefully structured rhyme scheme, which is different in the octave and in the sestet. In the octave the rhyme scheme is ABBAABBA, while in the sestet it is CDECDE.

CONTENT

Much like 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night', 'Remember' features repeated imperatives which command a loved one. The poem begins as an appeal from the narrator to a loved one to remember her after she dies. Repetition of the phrase word 'remember' and the phrase 'remember me' emphasize the desperation of the narrator. The reader does not know who the narrator is addressing, though 'tell me of our future that you planned' suggests it is addressed to a lover or spouse.

The definite change of tone when the octave ends is, therefore, very noticeable. The first eight lines are all asking the lover to remember her. However, in the sestet, the idea is introduced that it might actually be better in some ways to forget, at least 'for a while' – and the sentiment of the final lines is that the narrator would prefer her beloved to be happy rather than remember her, if it is a choice between the two ('Better by far you should forget and smile…'). Such a change in tone is typical of the sonnet form and is called the 'volta'. In Petrarchan sonnets, it occurs at the beginning of the sestet (line 9).

ACTIVITY 1

A02 **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ ANALYSING LANGUAGE

Work with a partner and select some key phrases from the poem, adding them to the table. These may:

- show how Rossetti thinks the person addressed should act after her death
- focus on features of her language and its effect
- pick out the effect of words that seem striking or unusual to you and that convey Rossetti's ideas.

▼ LANGUAGE	▼ COMMENT ON MEANING/EFFECT
'Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay'	This is a line that is interesting because it seems to switch from talking definitely about the journey into the metaphorical land of death to a 'real' situation.
'darkness and corruption'	These words themselves suggest death (the decaying of the body), but here they also seem to suggest bad thoughts in his mind that she does not want him to have.
'Remember me when I am gone away'	The start is a very direct and clear request, but the reader does not yet know that she is referring to death rather than going away on a journey.

LINKS WITH OTHER POEMS

The themes of love and death are, as you have seen, found in various ways in a number of the poems. There are interesting contrasts between their treatment in this poem and in, for example, 'Poem at Thirty-Nine' and 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night'. Another theme is time: some poems look back, some look forward, some do both. Think about the different ways in which time is discussed in the different poems.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **Why do you think Rossetti refers to the 'silent land'? Does this seem to be a positive or negative image to you? Why? How do you think the writer felt about dying?**
- **Give your thoughts on how a lover (perhaps a fiancé) might have reacted to the poem.**
- **Discuss the way the writer uses the ideas of remembering and forgetting in this poem.**
- **Explain the change that takes place from the octave to the sestet and how this affects your overall reading of the poem.**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A02 **A03**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

1 Re-read 'Remember' and 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night'.

Compare the presentation of death and mourning in 'Remember' and 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night'.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

SKILLS ANALYSIS, DECISION MAKING, INNOVATION

2 Re-read 'Remember'.

How does the poet communicate feelings of sadness in 'Remember' and one other poem in the Anthology?

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems. **(30 marks)**

Assessment Objective 1

Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of prose, poetry and drama texts

Assessment Objective 4

Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

MODERN PROSE

WHAT IS MODERN PROSE?

There is no fixed definition of what the word 'modern' means in the context of English Literature. You might assume that it means contemporary texts that are written in your own time. However, a work like John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* is classed as modern even though it was written in 1937, in a very different world from the one you live in today. You could therefore think of 'modern' in a broader sense as meaning any text written in the 20th or 21st century. 'Modern' has also been defined more precisely as meaning texts written during or after the First World War (1914–1918). Literature written after the war is seen as having different concerns and priorities to that written before the war; it is these differences which make it 'modern'. As the English poet Philip Larkin wrote, after the war there was 'never such innocence again'.

One important feature which distinguishes modern prose from earlier writing is the emergence of multiculturalism. Where previously the study of literature had tended to focus on English writers, the era of modern prose sees writers from many other countries become important. Indian writers like Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth and African writers like Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (pronounced 'gu-gi wa-ti-ong-go') are seen to be as worthy of study as contemporary English writers like Ian McEwan or Zadie Smith, if not more so. This is reflected in the modern prose syllabus, which includes writers with Nigerian, Chinese and Maori backgrounds. It is important to notice the historical changes behind this move towards a more multicultural approach to studying literature. Both the First and Second World War led to a more globally unified world, where the fates of different countries became more closely linked to each other. After the end of the Second World War, European countries which had previously held global empires, above all Britain, were forced to decolonise. Countries such as India and large parts of Africa were no longer under British rule. This meant they had to create new, post-colonial identities, a process which led to fascinating and important literature. Finally, the idea of globalisation, or the globally unified world which you live in today, means that the old, narrow focus on English writers no longer makes sense.

▲ A battlefield in the First World War

HOW TO READ THE TEXTS

There are some basic areas which you should try to cover when analysing any piece of literary prose, and these works of modern prose are no exception. One of these areas is structure: not only knowing the plot, but also seeing how the author uses the structure of the plot to communicate meaning. Another such area is character: what are the characters like and what defines the relationships between them? Yet another is language: how do the author's choices regarding language help to express the text's message? For example, the combination of Standard English with the Igbo language of Nigeria is very important in expressing the clash of cultures that is at the heart of *Things Fall Apart*.

Reading modern and contemporary texts might seem easier than reading older works. Often it is easier, as the language is much closer to the language which you speak and use today. However, many modern texts use unusual and experimental forms of language which can be more difficult to follow. Many (including several on the modern prose syllabus) also use local dialects and speech patterns that can be hard to follow for a reader who does not have the same cultural background as the characters. Often you will need to do some work to understand the context in order to fully appreciate texts like these.

THINKING ABOUT CONTEXT

There are several other ways in which context can be seen as the key to unlocking the meaning of many of these texts. Several texts are closely involved in their own national histories, which is often not the history of England or Western Europe. To understand *Of Mice and Men*, you need to understand America's Great Depression. To understand *Things Fall Apart*, you need to understand British colonialism in West Africa. Indeed, in the case of Steinbeck and Achebe, the texts are designed to make explicitly political points: *Of Mice and Men* is protesting against economic injustice; *Things Fall Apart* is protesting against colonial injustice. This political element, which is contained in many modern works and which is crucial to grasping their meaning, can only be understood by looking at their national and historical contexts.

TEXT OPTIONS

To Kill a Mockingbird	Harper Lee
Of Mice and Men	John Steinbeck
The Whale Rider	Witi Ihimaera
The Joy Luck Club	Amy Tan
Things Fall Apart	Chinua Achebe

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD
HARPER LEE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Harper Lee was born in 1926 in Monroeville, Alabama, in the 'Deep South' of the USA. The fictional town of Maycomb, in which *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set, is based closely on Monroeville. Although the book is not an autobiography, Lee clearly drew on her childhood experiences growing up in the Deep South in the 1930s. The events of the novel take place between 1933 and 1935, beginning when the child narrator, Scout, is six years old, the same age as Lee in 1933. Lee's father was also a lawyer, like Scout's father, Atticus. Lee's father also edited and owned a newspaper, which may have influenced Lee's portrayal of the character Mr Underwood.

At the heart of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is an exposure of the racism that was widespread in the South, which made it impossible for an African American like Tom Robinson to have a fair trial. The novel is set during the Great Depression, a time of economic hardship when poor white families (such as the Ewells and the farmers who want to lynch Tom) were particularly affected by poverty. It is likely that this hardship contributed to their racism. *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published in 1960, right in the middle of the civil rights movement, when racism was publicly challenged by activists like Martin Luther King.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

autobiography	a book that a person writes about their own life
narrator	a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

GENERAL VOCABULARY

racism	discrimination against someone of a different race due to a belief that one race is superior to or better than others
hardship	something that makes your life difficult or unpleasant
lynch	kill someone for an alleged crime or offence without being tried in a court

OTHER MEDIA

- Film: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Robert Mulligan (1962).

▲ The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 1963

- **Research the American civil rights movement and find out what its goals were.**
- **What does the novel teach readers about race relations in 1930s Alabama, and about Harper Lee's attitude towards them 30 years later?**

PLOT

Six-year-old Scout Finch and her ten-year-old brother Jem live with their father, Atticus, who is a lawyer. Their mother is dead, so they are cared for by their father's black housekeeper, Calpurnia. The children become friends with Dill, an imaginative boy who visits Maycomb to stay with his aunt. All three are fascinated by local stories about Boo Radley, a mysterious local loner who has not been seen outside his house for years. The children fantasise fearfully about him and try to make him come out of his house. They then begin to find things hidden in a hollow tree outside the Radley home, which later turn out to be intended as presents. The children try to spy on Boo by sneaking up to the back of the Radley house at night, narrowly avoiding being shot. Shortly after this risky adventure, the house of the children's friend, Miss Maudie, burns down. While Scout is watching the fire, someone puts a blanket around her. Jem thinks Boo must have done it and, gradually, Jem realises that Boo is not a monster, and that he was the person who left the presents in the tree for them.

Atticus is appointed to defend Tom Robinson in court. Tom is a black man accused of raping Mayella Ewell, a young white woman from a poor family. Atticus is determined to do his best, but he knows that the all-white jury will never take Tom's word against that of a white woman. Scout and Jem are soon enduring racist remarks from fellow school pupils and even from an adult, their neighbour, Mrs Dubose. Despite this, they do not attack their father for his decision to defend Tom; they soon find a new reason to admire Atticus when he kills a rabid dog with a single shot. However, the trial does mean that the children have to put up with their Aunt Alexandra, who arrives to supervise them until the trial is over.

Tension mounts in Maycomb when Atticus, on guard outside the jailhouse, is threatened by a mob intent on lynching Tom Robinson. However, the children turn up and Scout innocently attempts polite conversation with Mr Cunningham, who is one of the ringleaders. This shames the mob into leaving without harming Tom.

Against Atticus's wishes, Scout, Jem and Dill watch the trial. Significantly, they watch from the balcony reserved for black people. Atticus proves that the partially disabled Robinson could not have struck the blows to Mayella's face. There is strong evidence that she and her father, Bob Ewell, are lying and that she had been making sexual advances to Robinson. It is implied that the attack on Mayella was really carried out by Ewell himself, reacting to her promiscuous behaviour towards a black man. Despite this, Robinson is found guilty and the children, especially Jem and Dill, are sickened by this injustice. Later, Robinson tries to escape and is shot dead, leaving his wife and children alone.

Despite the trial's outcome, Bob Ewell still feels that Atticus's strong defence has humiliated him and he intends to get revenge. He insults Atticus in public and intimidates Robinson's widow. Finally, Ewell lies in wait for Jem and Scout as they return home in the dark after a Halloween pageant at their school and attacks them. Jem's arm is broken in the attack, while Scout's life is saved by the wire-reinforced 'ham' costume that she wears to the pageant. They are saved by Boo Radley, who steps in and carries Jem home.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

loner	someone who prefers to be alone or who has no friends
jury	a group of people which gives the final verdict or judgement in court cases that are tried by jury
lynching	killing someone for an alleged crime or offence without being tried in a court (also used as a noun)
ringleaders	someone who leads a group, often a group that is doing something illegal or wrong
promiscuous	having casual or temporary sexual relationships with many people
Halloween	a festival celebrated on the night of 31 October when children dress up, often as frightening monsters or supernatural creatures
pageant	a public entertainment, often in celebration of a particular festival

Sheriff Tate discovers that Ewell has died in the struggle. Atticus assumes that Jem is responsible for his death and must face trial. However, Tate sticks to his version of events and insists that Ewell fell on his own knife. Atticus realises that Tate is attempting to protect Boo Radley, not Jem, and accepts this version of events. Boo asks Scout to take him home and she shows her new maturity by making it look as if he is escorting her.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

maturity the state of having reached a stage of development, especially emotional, that would be expected of an adult

▶ **Consider the statement: '*To Kill a Mockingbird* is a serious novel, but it is also a humorous one'. Which passages in the novel do you find funny? How does humour contribute to the novel?**

CHARACTERS

SCOUT FINCH

- the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- intelligent and a highly competent reader, but hot-tempered
- a believer in justice
- her brother's greatest admirer
- a loving daughter to Atticus
- a tomboy
- inclined to settle arguments by fighting
- well meaning and generous
- more mature by the end of the novel

GENERAL VOCABULARY

tomboy a girl who plays with boys or who plays and enjoys the sort of games associated with boys

ATTICUS FINCH

- father of Scout and Jem
- convinced of the need for people to understand each other if they are to live in peace
- a believer in equal justice for all, regardless of race or background
- opposed to violence and racism
- tolerant
- modest – never tells his children of his shooting talents which led to him being nicknamed 'one-shot Finch'
- highly intelligent
- a good lawyer
- a loving but unorthodox father
- a believer in telling children the truth
- good at reaching compromise

▲ Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch and Brock Peters as Tom Robinson in the 1962 film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

DILL (CHARLES BAKER)

- Scout and Jem's friend
- small for his age
- highly imaginative
- good at making up games
- quick to think of believable excuses

- convinced that his mother and stepfather do not love him
- happy to be with Jem and Scout
- feels at home in the Finch household
- sickened by the outcome of the trial

MISS MAUDIE ATKINSON

- a friend and neighbour of the Finch family
- kind and generous to the children
- honest and straightforward
- a woman with a sense of humour
- sympathetic and tolerant
- opposed to prejudice and hypocrisy
- a keen gardener
- philosophical about her house burning down

MR DOLPHUS RAYMOND

- a white man who comes from a rich family and lives out of town with a black woman
- the father of mixed-race children
- tolerated by the white community who label him a 'drunk'
- someone who actually only drinks cola
- sympathetic towards Dill and upset by the prejudice shown at the trial

JEM FINCH

- Scout's older brother
- good-natured
- thoughtful
- responsible
- respectful towards his father
- anxious to keep his father's respect
- protective towards Scout
- hoping to become a lawyer
- disillusioned and distressed by the outcome of the trial

BOB EWELL

- a poor white man living near the black part of town
- a widower, like Atticus
- the father of Mayella (19), Burris (in Scout's class at school), and several other children
- lazy, living on state benefits – regarded as 'white trash'

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sympathetic applied to a character in fiction, this means a character who is liked by the reader or other characters

GENERAL VOCABULARY

prejudice a preformed judgement or opinion that is not based on facts or experience, usually leading to dislike or aggression

hypocrisy when someone claims to be better than they really are or professes to hold certain beliefs while acting completely differently

cola a non-alcoholic drink, usually fizzy and brown in colour, which was originally flavoured by cola tree nuts

disillusioned disappointed because you have lost your belief that someone is good, or that an idea is right

white trash an American slang term (with negative connotations) for poor white people, particularly in the southern states

- a drinker
- violent (he beats Mayella and attacks Scout and Jem)
- a liar, even in court
- resentful of Atticus
- probably guilty of abusing Mayella
- killed by Boo Radley

AUNT ALEXANDRA

- proud of her ancestry
- a snob
- convinced that Atticus gives in too much to his children's wishes
- overbearing towards Calpurnia
- determined to make Scout behave in a more 'feminine' way
- loyal to Atticus, despite disagreeing with him

GENERAL VOCABULARY

snob someone who thinks they are better than people from a lower social class

overbearing overwhelmingly strong or controlling, or unpleasantly bossy

CALPURNIA

- Atticus's black housekeeper
- like a mother to Scout and Jem
- the mother of her own grown-up children
- strict about manners and hospitality
- devoted to the Finch family
- forceful in protecting the children
- respected among the black people in Maycomb

TOM ROBINSON

- a 25-year-old black man
- married to Helen and the father of three children
- respectable, with a strong moral sense
- partially disabled – his left arm was caught in a machine when he was 12
- a worker for Link Deas
- generous – he helps Mayella and feels sorry for her
- falsely accused of raping Mayella
- killed when trying to escape from prison

BOO RADLEY

- a neighbour of the Finches
- a loner, keeping himself to himself
- assumed for a long time by the children to be a monster
- kept at home by his brother Nathan

- devoted to the children from a distance
- very shy
- responsible for saving Jem and Scout from Bob Ewell

ACTIVITY 1 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION, COMMUNICATION

▼ FEMALE FIGURES AND ROLES

Some people think that Scout is a tomboy because her mother is dead and she has no strong female role models. Write about how far Calpurnia, Miss Maudie and Aunt Alexandra offer suitable role models for Scout, and what Scout's attitude is towards each of them.

THEMES

GENERAL VOCABULARY

menial work, such as cleaning, that is considered to be unskilled and is usually physical

persecution to treat someone cruelly or unfairly over a period of time, especially because of their religious or political beliefs

Negro a black person of an African ethnic origin; this word was used until the mid-twentieth century, particularly to describe African Americans, but was replaced by the use of the word 'black' and it is now considered to be outdated and offensive

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

ironic using words to convey a meaning that is completely opposite to their apparent meaning

RACISM

Slavery was abolished in the USA in 1865. In the 1930s, when the novel is set, most white Americans, especially in former slave-owning states like Alabama, still believed themselves to be naturally superior to black people. In the novel, poor white people like Bob Ewell and the men who form the lynch party, such as Mr Cunningham, are brutally racist. They are extremely ready to believe that even a respected black man like Tom Robinson would rape a white woman and to condemn him without trial.

Most of the better-educated, wealthier white people in Maycomb are also racist, but less actively so. They think that black people should know their place and behave properly, such as speaking respectfully to white people, going only to their own church in the poor part of town and doing menial jobs. Only a few white people, like Atticus and Miss Maudie, see racism as an evil. Dolphus Raymond agrees with them, but chooses not to challenge it openly. Instead, he prefers to stand outside mainstream society by pretending to be permanently drunk. These widely-held social attitudes mean that, although Robinson receives a trial in court, the trial cannot be fair. Atticus knows that he cannot win the case because, whatever the members of the jury privately believe, they will not publicly acknowledge that a black man could be innocent when accused of rape by a white woman.

The double standards and hypocrisy of some of the wealthier white people are heavily ironic. For example, the Missionary Circle ladies raise money for the 'saintly' J. Grimes Everett to bring Christian morality to an African tribe, the 'poor Mrunas', but fail to show Christian compassion towards the black people in their hometown. Scout's teacher, Miss Gates, is opposed to Hitler's persecution of the Jews, but is overheard outside the courthouse complaining that black people are getting 'above themselves' and should be 'taught a lesson'. It is not surprising that these attitudes are passed on to the next generation: even Scout herself says of Tom Robinson, 'After all, he's just a Negro.'

GENERAL VOCABULARY

empathy the ability to share or appreciate the feelings, point of view or emotional response of another person (or animal); not to be confused with sympathy

bend the law not strictly adhere to the law in order to favour someone

portrayed presented

▲ A mockingbird

COMPASSION AND EMPATHY

The theme of compassion and empathy is closely related to the theme of racism. When Dolphus Raymond speaks about 'the simple hell people give other people – without even thinking', he is referring to the way in which racial prejudice blinds people to an awareness of what it is like to be a victim of racism. In comparison, the Missionary Society ladies' lack of empathy towards black people is highlighted by Mrs Merriweather's complaint about the behaviour of her servant, Sophie, after the trial: according to Mrs Merriweather, she is just being a 'sulky darkie'.

Empathy is a guiding principle for Atticus, as shown when he says that you can 'never really understand a person... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it'. He tries to teach this to his children, such as when he explains to them that the abusive Mrs Dubose deserves their respect because she has overcome a drug addiction. Atticus shows his compassion and empathy in many other ways: he is understanding towards poor clients like Mr Cunningham, considerate towards Mayella Ewell in court and even partially excuses Bob Ewell for his behaviour.

To Kill a Mockingbird suggests that vulnerable members of society, such as Boo Radley and Tom Robinson, particularly deserve to be treated with compassion. They are like the mockingbirds that Atticus tells the children not to shoot, because they do no harm. It is similarly significant when Jem prevents Scout from squashing an insect (a 'roly poly') for the same reason. Ironically, the fact that Tom Robinson admits his compassion for Mayella helps to turn the jury against him and make them more likely to find him guilty.

▶ **What is the significance of the mockingbird in the novel? What do you think it represents?**

JUSTICE

The theme of justice is also linked to the theme of racism. Prejudice means pre-judging, or judging people before knowing what they are really like. Tom Robinson cannot be treated justly in a racist community, but the fact that he has at least been tried in court and that Atticus has actually proved his innocence is, in Miss Maudie's words, a 'baby step' towards a just society.

Atticus passionately believes in justice and in the idea that all people should be considered equal in the eyes of the law. He believes this so much so that he does not want to bend the law even to protect his own son when he thinks that Jem killed Bob Ewell. Sheriff Tate's version of Ewell's death is a lie, but it protects Boo Radley and in doing so it ensures moral justice. To put Boo through the public exposure of a trial would only add to the unjust treatment he already receives at the hands of his brother, Nathan.

▶ **In what ways are Bob and Mayella Ewell portrayed as being guilty? What do you think could be said in their defence?**

FAMILY LIFE

Atticus's wife died when Scout was two, but Atticus shows no signs of looking for a second wife and family life for Scout and Jem seems very secure. They know their father loves them, respects their individuality and does not talk to them as inferiors. In addition, they are loved and cared for by Calpurnia. For Dill, who has everything that he needs materially but is unhappy with his mother and stepfather, the Finch family home is a place of security and refuge.

When Atticus feels he has to discipline his children (for example, when Jem destroys Mrs Dubose's camellias and is made to read to her every day for a month) he explains his reasons for the punishment, showing that justice is at the heart of the Finch household.

The family life portrayed in the Ewell household is very different. The Ewell children are also motherless, but they are filthy and neglected. Bob Ewell is a violent drunk living on welfare and his children have no one like Calpurnia to care for them – only their eldest sister, Mayella. There is also evidence that Ewell abuses Mayella.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

on welfare receiving support from the government

GROWING UP

To Kill a Mockingbird covers a period of about three years, during which time the children grow up in many ways. Attaining maturity is a key theme of the novel. At first, the children believe that Boo Radley is a drooling monster who eats raw squirrels, but they come to realise that he is just a very shy and vulnerable man who quietly observes them and wishes them well. It is Jem who first begins to work out that Boo is performing small acts of kindness towards them and that the reason that Boo does not leave his home is that he does not want to go out into a world which is cruel to him.

By the end of the novel, Scout has also grown up enough to treat Boo with friendly kindness, while Jem has learned about self-control and empathy from the incident with Mrs Dubose's camellias. During the course of the novel, Scout also gradually learns to exercise self-control, such as when she is insulted by children at school because Atticus is defending a black man in court. Above all, the children learn about the realities of the world from the injustice of the trial, which is a source of bitter disillusionment for all of them but especially Jem.

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Go through the novel and make a record of the five or six episodes that you consider to be most important, where Scout and Jem learn about people and life. Write down what Scout and Jem learn from each episode. For example, what do they learn from how their father deals with a rabid dog?

AUTHOR'S CRAFT

NARRATIVE VOICE

The novel is written in the first person from Scout's viewpoint. This means that the reader receives a very lively and immediate account of her experience and can easily empathise with her, such as when she is frustrated because Jem seems to be patronising her. However, first-person narrative presents a technical difficulty because the author has to find ways to present information which Scout would not have access to. Lee does this using a variety of devices, such as conveying to the reader information about Boo Radley through what Atticus and Miss Maudie tell the children. Occasionally, the children hear Maycomb's very frequent gossip, or overhear adult conversation. This is how the children find out that Bob Ewell is threatening Atticus. Scout

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

first person written from the perspective of one person – that is, using 'I'; this differs from the second person, which directly addresses the reader ('you'), and the third person ('he', 'she' and 'it')

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrative the story or plot

GENERAL VOCABULARY

filtered certain information and details are removed or ignored due to a particular perspective
depiction image
virtue moral goodness of character and behaviour

(and therefore the reader) also receives information from Jem or Dill, such as when Dill describes accompanying Atticus when he goes to tell Helen Robinson that Tom has been shot. Information is also worked into the narrative naturally as Jem has a more mature understanding of what is happening and he explains events to Scout.

An important feature of this narrative voice is that the young Scout's viewpoint is filtered through the perspective of her own adult self as she recalls the events. This gives the reader a sense of the immediacy of a child's feelings, but with an adult's ability to interpret and evaluate what she saw and heard. This adult voice could be interpreted as being the voice of Lee herself. Indeed, on rare occasions, Lee's personal views come through more clearly, such as when she criticises the school system that discourages Scout from reading.

▲ A courtroom

OBSERVATION OF PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

Although *To Kill a Mockingbird* gives readers a vivid impression of its key characters, especially its narrator, it is also a novel about the individuals that make up Maycomb's society and about that society as a whole. Its view is critical, especially of racism and injustice. The educational system is criticised through Scout's account of her introduction to school. The legal system is criticised more severely throughout the trial, especially through Lee's depiction of the prosecutor Gilmer's lack of respect for Tom Robinson. The reader also sees the self-righteousness of the middle-class white women of Maycomb, including Aunt Alexandra.

However, the novel is also an affectionate depiction of the people of Maycomb. It presents the virtue of Sheriff Heck Tate, who protects Boo Radley; of Mr Underwood, who is ready to defend Atticus from the lynch party and who later writes a critical account of Tom Robinson's shooting; and of Dolphus Raymond, who sympathises with Dill during the trial. The reader also sees how welcoming most of the black churchgoers are towards Scout and Jem, despite Lula's objections, and the generosity with which they support Helen Robinson. Few characters are shown to be wholly negative. For example, Mr Avery is an apparently unpleasant man and is disliked by the children (they make a snowman that looks very much like him); however, they later see him acting with bravery, rescuing Miss Maudie's furniture from her burning house.

ACTIVITY 3 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

▼ CULTURE AND ATTITUDES

Choose three characters and write about how far you think they are influenced in their outlook and behaviour by the culture and attitudes of 1930s Maycomb.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

porches a structure built onto the front or back entrance of a house, with a floor and a roof but no walls

SETTING

Most of the novel is set in Maycomb. On one occasion, the children go outside Maycomb to swim, and another time the family go to Finch's Landing to spend Christmas with Scout's aunt, but otherwise the narrative stays in the town of Maycomb. There are no striking descriptions of the landscape, but the reader is left with a strong impression of the town itself: the wooden houses with porches which residents sit on, the tree-lined streets and the weather, especially its summer heat and humidity and also, in one chapter, a rare snowfall.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

squalor	extreme dirt and poor condition
subtly	not in an obvious or noticeable way

Lee vividly depicts the squalor of the Ewells's home, which is relieved only by the flowers that Mayella grows, as if in an attempt to rise above their poverty. There is also a strong sense of place in the chapter in which Bob Ewell attacks the children, on a warm moonless night that threatens a thunderstorm. Ewell chooses a dark spot beneath a tree, away from the road, to attack the children. Strangely, the sense of place here is made more vivid by the fact that Scout has to work hard to know where she is, as she cannot easily see while wearing the ham costume.

▶ **Which qualities does Harper Lee seem to admire and which does she dislike in the society she portrays?**

LANGUAGE

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

satire	a form of writing that criticises the flaws of people, institutions or societies, often using humour, irony and exaggeration to do so

TONE OF VOICE

The tone of Lee's writing is influenced by the fact that Scout's childhood experiences are viewed through the memories of the character as an adult. The language is frequently more sophisticated than the language used by a child, even an intelligent and articulate child such as Scout. Similarly, the tone is often humorously ironic. In effect, the novel is the adult Scout's affectionate satire of the view and understanding of the world that she held as a child. This can be seen in the description of Scout's first schoolteacher, Miss Caroline, and in the description of Scout's strange ideas about Boo Radley. The tone changes subtly as the young Scout grows older, so that by the end of the novel it holds a new maturity. The reader is also made aware of the affection that the adult narrator feels for the Maycomb of her childhood, despite all of its faults.

ACTIVITY 4 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS

▼ CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

Read the following passages in the novel.

- From the start of the novel to the end of the paragraph beginning 'During his first five years…'
- Chapter 1, the paragraph beginning 'Inside the house lived a malevolent phantom.'
- Chapter 11, to the end of the paragraph beginning 'She was vicious.'
- Chapter 24, from 'I tried pressing my behind against the door…' to the end of the paragraph beginning 'I hadn't meant to be funny.'

Pick out two sentences from each passage that reveal how the experience of the young Scout is seen from her adult viewpoint. This may be revealed by the sophistication of the language, a use of irony, or an adult understanding of the child's feelings. Copy and complete the table below. Write down the two sentences from each passage and comment on their meaning and how they reveal narrative voice. An example has been done for you.

▼ KEY PHRASE	▼ SIGNIFICANCE
'Mindful of John Wesley's strictures... as the putting on of costly apparel.'	Complex sentence; sophisticated formal words like 'strictures' (restrictions); knowledgeable reference to Wesley; ironic use of biblical language that Finch himself might have quoted.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A01 **A04**

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your response.

1 'You never really understand a person... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.' How does Harper Lee present empathy in *To Kill a Mockingbird*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

2 Compare and contrast the characters of Bob Ewell and Atticus Finch. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

3 Explore the relationship between Calpurnia and the children. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

4 What is the significance of social outsiders in *To Kill a Mockingbird*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

5 Explore how Harper Lee creates a sense of drama in the court scenes of *To Kill A Mockingbird*. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

5 The confrontations in court are pivotal to the structure [1] of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It is at this dramatic point in the novel that Scout and Jem witness their father Atticus Finch at his most powerful and clever. He is trying to save the life of a black man, Tom Robinson, who has been falsely accused of the rape of a white woman, Mayella Ewell; this brings to light the deep injustice and racism of the 'Deep South' in the 1930s. [2]

One of the ways that Lee creates drama is in focusing on characters' body language in court. She describes Bob Ewell as 'a little bantam cock of a man' who 'struts' to the stand. Lee uses this animalistic imagery [3] to suggest Bob Ewell is not a big man, as 'bantam' means small, but he makes up for this by filling the court room with his arrogance. The verb 'strut' [4] suggests he holds himself as if he is in charge, like the only male among a roost of hens. This is particularly significant when juxtaposed [5] with Finch's relaxed body language: 'He was sitting behind his table; his chair was skewed to one side, his legs crossed and one arm resting on the back of his chair.' This is Atticus's domain, so he is calm and quietly authoritative.

---

[1] A01 and A02: It can be useful to start your essay with reference to the novel as a whole, and the structure.

[2] A04: Remember to include links to the historical context of the novel.

[3] A02: Writers often refer to characters as animal-like to describe body language and personality traits.

[4] A02: Selecting individual words, identifying the word class, and exploring the effect is a way of showing close attention to the writer's language.

[5] A02: Juxtaposition is a contrast in images or ideas. This is a good language feature to comment on for A02.

OF MICE AND MEN
JOHN STEINBECK

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

John Steinbeck was born in 1902 in the Salinas Valley, a farming region in the state of California on the west coast of the USA, and died in 1968 in New York. His birthplace is the setting for his short novel (also called a novella) *Of Mice and Men*. Steinbeck's novels often focus on the lives of oppressed, working-class characters like George and Lennie. Although the family he came from was quite well-off, Steinbeck chose to drop out of university and spent much of his early adult life working as a manual labourer. The descriptions of ordinary, working Americans that fill Steinbeck's novels are therefore drawn from his personal knowledge of working life. Steinbeck even worked on a ranch, an experience which provided direct inspiration for the setting of *Of Mice and Men*. Steinbeck's most famous work is *The Grapes of Wrath*, a novel which describes the life of a farming family suffering through the Great Depression. *The Grapes of Wrath* was hugely popular when it was first published, and led to Steinbeck winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1939. In 1962, Steinbeck was awarded the most prestigious award available to writers, the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Steinbeck wrote *Of Mice and Men* in 1936, three years before *The Grapes of Wrath* and also during the Great Depression. The Depression was a period of economic crisis and stagnation, when there were very high levels of poverty and unemployment, and when farming communities in particular suffered greatly. Many farmers and farm workers who had lost their jobs in other states travelled west to try to find work on the farms and ranches of California, just like George and Lennie. As there were so many of these workers looking for employment, they were limited to unreliable migrant jobs which paid badly and were often at the mercy of dishonest bosses and property owners. An example of such a boss can be seen in *Of Mice and Men* in the figure of Curley.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

novella short novel

GENERAL VOCABULARY

ranch a very large farm in the western US and Canada where sheep, cattle or horses are bred

the Great Depression a period of American history defined by poverty and high unemployment

at the mercy of under the control of and reliant on the good nature of someone or something

DID YOU KNOW?

Steinbeck's attempts to write with the language and viewpoint of ordinary, uneducated people have often led to his novels being considered shocking and controversial. Since the time of its publication to the present day, people in the USA have tried to censor *Of Mice and Men* and to ban it from schools and classrooms. This is partly because of the rough language that the characters use and partly because of the novel's presentation of mental disability. However, it is also because *Of Mice and Men* criticises the USA's economic system (also known as capitalism) as being unjust and unequal, in other words, a system which divides 'mice' and 'men'. It is the breakdown of capitalism which is widely seen as producing the problems and injustices of the Great Depression.

FREE
COFFEE & DOUGHNUTS
THE UNEMPLOYED
FREE SOUP

▲ Unemployed men queuing for food during the Great Depression

GENERAL VOCABULARY

capitalism	the economic system that the USA uses
the American Dream	the dream of owing property and being financially independent

Of Mice and Men criticises the economic situation of the USA at the time: poor characters like George and Lennie are not helped to improve their lives. Instead the situation traps them and exploits their labour. George and Lennie dream of owning and working their own land, rather than working for someone else. However, it is clear that this dream, sometimes called the American Dream, is impossible to achieve in the world of *Of Mice and Men.*

ACTIVITY 1

A04

SKILLS PROBLEM SOLVING, REASONING, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

▼ THE TEXT IN CONTEXT

Injustice is one of the most important themes in *Of Mice and Men*. The injustice in the novel can often be linked to the context of the Great Depression and Steinbeck's criticism of the American society around him. Copy and complete the table with a list of all the examples of injustice you can find in the novel. How many can be connected with Steinbeck's social context?

▼ EXAMPLE OF INJUSTICE	▼ POSSIBLE LINK TO STEINBECK'S SOCIAL CONTEXT
Candy's dog is killed because it is old, irritating and has outlived its usefulness.	Demonstrates how things and people which/who are not useful as workers are discarded and rejected.

KEY POINT

In addition to its other themes of innocence, loneliness and country living, the characters and plot of *Of Mice and Men* are all closely related to Steinbeck's critique of American society and the Great Depression.

PLOT

The two central characters of this novella are close friends; they have known each other since childhood. George Milton is dependable and intelligent, although uneducated, whereas Lennie Small is mentally-impaired and extremely strong. They travel to a ranch near Salinas to work, after receiving an offer of a job. They share a dream that some day they will own a piece of land and be able to make a home together. The reader learns that they have run away from their previous employment because of accusations of an assault after Lennie stroked and held on to a beautiful garment worn by a girl. Despite the hostile attitude of Curley, the boss's son at the ranch, they settle in well. They are offered help and support by Slim, who gives one of his puppies to Lennie. During this time George and Lennie also meet Candy, an old farm worker on the ranch, whose elderly dog is killed by Curley. The difficulties with Curley do not end here. Later in the story, Curley attacks Lennie, who is making fun of him. Lennie does not fight until he receives a signal from George, after which he crushes Curley's hand.

Problems continue when Lennie accidentally kills the puppy. This same lack of awareness of how strong he is leads to even more trouble when he comes across the flirtatious and lonely wife of Curley in a barn. Things go badly wrong when she allows him to stroke her hair, mostly because of his love of stroking soft objects. When she screams, Lennie panics, and, again unintentionally, kills her by breaking her neck. When George and Candy find the body, they realise that Lennie must have killed her. Soon after this, Curley and his ranch hands come out to murder (or lynch) him. George realises there is no way out for Lennie this time.

George discovers Lennie by the green pool and tries to calm him down. He talks to him about their dream of owning their own ranch, rabbits and the land and then, while Lennie is distracted, George kills him with a shot from Carlson's gun in the back of his head, just as Candy's dog had been shot. George does this to save Lennie from the lynch mob. Curley, Slim and Carlson arrive there after Lennie's death. Only Slim understands what has really happened, as George tells Curley and Carlson that he had to shoot Lennie in self-defence.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

flirtatious	behaving in a way that deliberately tries to attract sexual attention
ranch hands	manual laborers
lynch	kill someone for an alleged crime or offence without being tried in a court
lynch mob	a group of people that kills someone, without a legal trial, usually by hanging

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

Several animals die in *Of Mice and Men* before the deaths of Curley's wife and Lennie occur. What is Steinbeck trying to show with the deaths of animals like Candy's dog or Lennie's mouse? How do the animals' deaths anticipate the human deaths?

CHARACTERS

GEORGE

- sharp-featured, intelligent and loyal
- Lennie's friend and protector
- long-suffering, but at times becomes frustrated, impatient and angry
- self-sacrificing and dependable
- feels in the end that he has to kill Lennie to prevent him from suffering further
- a man with a dream of owning his own farm and land, together with Lennie

LENNIE

- the constant companion of George
- large, clumsy and slow-moving,
- slow-witted and childlike, because of his learning disability
- obsessed by soft, furry creatures, which he wishes to stroke
- a man of great strength, who lacks self-control and the ability to think before his actions
- a kind, gentle man, who copies and looks up devotedly to his friend George
- helpless and dependent on George

GENERAL VOCABULARY

slow-witted not good at understanding things

▲ A rabbit

CURLEY'S WIFE

- beautiful, young and wears heavy makeup
- the only key female character in the story
- never named and is referred to only as Curley's wife, being treated very much as a possession
- unhappily married to Curley
- desperate to fulfil her dream of becoming a movie star
- someone who seeks attention and is quite flirtatious
- misunderstood by the men on the ranch, with the exception of Slim
- regarded as being without strong morals, a 'tart'
- impressed by Lennie's strength; this proves to be a fatal mistake

CURLEY

- small, well-built and with a head of curly hair
- the boss's son, who has a position of power on the ranch
- an aggressive bully with a temper that he cannot control
- deeply unpopular
- unfriendly to George and Lennie when they arrive
- described as 'calculating' and 'pugnacious'
- newly married; he is jealous and insecure about his wife

GENERAL VOCABULARY

intimidated	scared and made to feel insecure
mules	animals that have a donkey and a horse as parents
crooked	bent, twisted, or not in a straight line
harness room	a room used to store equipment for horses and other working animals

CANDY

- elderly and physically disabled: he lost his right hand in a work accident
- a 'swamper' (cleaner) on the ranch
- friendly and likes to gossip
- rather a lonely and insecure figure
- attached to his old dog, and does not want him to be killed
- easily intimidated
- hoping to be part of George and Lennie's dream

SLIM

- a team-leader, liked and respected by all the other men on the ranch
- a tall, distinguished man who wears a Stetson hat
- described as the 'prince of the ranch', a natural leader
- exceptionally skilled at working with the mules
- quiet, modest and thoughtful; people always stop to listen when he starts to speak
- seen as wise, knowledgeable and perceptive
- pleasant and welcoming in his manner

CROOKS

- an old, black, physically disabled man, with a crooked back
- lives alone in the harness room because of the colour of his skin
- often blamed by others because of racial prejudice
- very respectful of Slim
- has a reasonable amount of possessions with him, unlike most of the men
- a reader, who has old books that are well-used
- 'proud and aloof', he keeps himself apart from the others
- someone who thinks about, for a short period of time, being part of the dream of George, Lennie and Candy
- cynical about other people's dreams of owning land
- lonely and frustrated
- someone with a dream of looking after the rabbits on the farm he hopes to share with George

GENERAL VOCABULARY

pushy someone who does everything they can to get what they want from other people

CARLSON

- a big, strong ranch hand
- **pushy** and insensitive to the needs of others
- the one who kills Candy's old dog after much persuasion
- the owner of the gun that is used to kill Candy's dog and Lennie

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** PROBLEM SOLVING

▼ CONSIDERING THE CHARACTERS

Use the following as a quick self-test on your knowledge of the characters by matching the names with the correct description. When you have correctly matched the names and descriptions, add further comments that will improve your understanding of the characters, such as additional physical features, information you learn about them and their lives, as well as comments on their personalities.

George	A black man who works in the stables and lives by himself in the adjoining harness room.
Lennie	A lonely character who has dreams of acting on the stage.
Candy	The one-handed old man whose job is to clean the **bunk house**.
Curley	A small man who protects and becomes friends with Lennie.
Slim	The very large, strong man who depends on George.
Carlson	The ranch hand who shows the article in the magazine to Slim.
Whit	A man who is admired by everyone because he is wise and skilful at his work.
Crooks	An aggressive but small man, who is feared by some.
Curley's wife	The ranch worker who shoots the old dog belonging to Candy.

HINT

Notice that all of the characters in *Of Mice and Men* are male, apart from Curley's wife. Gender is therefore an important issue in the novel.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

bunk house basic accommodation for workers

THEMES

DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS

Although this is one of the central themes of the novel, dreams rarely, if ever, come true. There is a clue to the book's pessimism in its title, which comes from lines in the poem *To a Mouse* by Robert Burns: 'The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft agley'. This is often translated as 'people's plans, and dreams, often do not work out the way they intend'. The shared dream of land and a small farm that George and Lennie have is first mentioned near the start

▲ A farm in the USA

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sympathetic applied to a character in fiction, this means a character who is liked by the reader or other characters

HINT

Referring to the American Dream is a good way to bring context into your answer in an exam.

of the novel. It comes up again one final time, with tragic consequences, just before the mercy-killing of Lennie by George. This dream is a powerful way of keeping them going through their hard lives. Particularly for Lennie, the idea of being able to make a home and keep rabbits gives him something positive to look forward to. In Section 3, it looks as if the dream is beginning to become reality.

Another character who has dreams is Curley's wife. When she tells Lennie what she would really like, this is the first time in the novel that the reader learns about her dreams. She also shares this with Lennie just before she dies. The reader discovers that she would like to escape from her unhappy marriage and be a famous film star in Hollywood, living a life of luxury. Her way of dressing up and trying to look attractive is linked to how she thinks she must look in order to pursue a dream that she has had since before she married. In a letter to the actress, Claire Luce, who played the part of Curley's wife on Broadway, Steinbeck indicated that the character should be perceived sympathetically and not as the shallow and foolish character which she first appears to be.

The dreams of the characters in *Of Mice and Men* are related to the idea of the American Dream. In a book called *The Epic of America* (1931), James Truslow Adams wrote about the idea of a time in the future when all people would be valued and have a fulfilling life. This idea emerged at the time of the Great Depression and offered people hope of escape from the harsh realities of poverty, and even starvation, which the characters in *Of Mice and Men* were struggling to avoid. Many American readers of this story in the 1930s would have been influenced strongly by this dream, but would have been surprised by the pessimism of Crooks on the subject when he says: 'Just like heaven. Ever'body wants a little piece of lan'… Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land.'

▶ **Think about the relationship between George and Lennie: how do they depend on each other? In what ways are they different from each other and in what ways are they similar?**

LONELINESS

Most of the characters in the novel are migrant workers, who would feel their isolation and loneliness strongly as they moved from ranch to ranch, often far from home, finding work wherever they could. This meant they had few ties, roots or friends. They saw themselves as undervalued members of the community with little security and a limited sense of identity. When they moved on, they were not really missed.

The lives of lonely characters who lack companionship are shown clearly in the cases of Candy, Crooks and Curley's wife. Candy has some company while his dog is alive and strongly feels the lack of this after the dog is killed. Indeed, his dog's death due to old age and uselessness seems to foreshadow what is going to happen to Candy when he is too old to work. Crooks makes specific comments on this theme: 'A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you.' As for Curley's wife, her loneliness comes from the lack of warmth from Curley in her marriage. This emphasises her struggle to overcome loneliness, which the men interpret in very negative ways. This makes the situation worse because they all avoid her, partly from fear of Curley's jealousy. It is worth noting that the name of the town 'Soledad' is Spanish for 'solitude'.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

It is not entirely clear what kind of character Curley's wife is supposed to be. At times she appears shallow and foolish, but when she speaks with Lennie she seems far more complex and sympathetic. How are you supposed to understand this character? Is Steinbeck primarily interested in men and not very good at writing interesting female characters, or is Curley's wife in fact one of the most interesting characters in the novel? More generally, how is gender and the relationship between the genders presented in *Of Mice and Men*?

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

contrast a literary device where two objects, people or ideas are placed next to each other to highlight their differences

FRIENDSHIP

In this novel, the theme of friendship is very important. Lennie and George's friendship is incredibly strong and is seen by other characters as striking and unusual. This directly contrasts with the novel's presentation of loneliness. It is explored through the way that they relate to each other; they have a mutual dependence.

Later, the idea of two men travelling together became a frequent subject of films, especially from the 1960s onwards (*Easy Rider* is perhaps the best-known example, with a later female counterpart, *Thelma and Louise*). Although in a sense it is obviously Lennie who depends on George, because of his mental limitations, the reader can see how strongly George's life depends on having Lennie, especially for physical security. So, when George kills Lennie, the reader feels that George's life is going to be very difficult without him.

KEY POINT

Many of the themes in *Of Mice and Men* are tragic in nature. The failure for dreams to come true, the loss of friendships and individual isolation all produce a novel which is generally sad and melancholy in its tone.

In the case of other characters, even where there are no close friendships, there is often an attempt to form relationships and have people that they can trust, because friendship is highly desirable as a way of overcoming their loneliness. One example of this is Candy's attempt to participate in George and Lennie's dream of having their own farm. However, the circumstances in which the characters live make it unlikely that many successful relationships will be formed.

▶ **Do you understand why George feels he has to kill Lennie? What else could he have done?**

AUTHOR'S CRAFT

As the text is a novella, or short novel, the narrative is far less developed than in many longer works, and there is a significant amount of dialogue. This emphasises the speed of events, as little time is spent on description (although each section opens with details of the setting, like on a film or theatre set). Indeed, *Of Mice and Men* was also written as a play, and its closeness to drama can be seen in the novella's structure. This simplicity of plot and narrative has the following effects.

- It reflects the fact that the novel deals with people who are largely uncomplicated and ordinary.
- The sections of the book are like the acts of a play and, like most plays, each section is set in one place, with the following structure:

Sections 1 and 6	The Salinas riverbank and pool
Sections 2 and 3	The bunk house at the ranch
Section 4	The harness room
Section 5	The barn

DID YOU KNOW?

In *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck was attempting to combine the forms of prose and drama together, producing a work that was at once both a play and a novel.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrative the story or plot

Note especially that, by having the first and last sections set in the same area, the action is made to seem cyclical, with the two men together being the only ones on the 'stage'. This helps to tie the overall narrative together.

▶ **The novel can be seen as dark and depressing. Why might readers think this? Do you agree, or is it possibly more hopeful than it appears?**

ACTIVITY 3 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

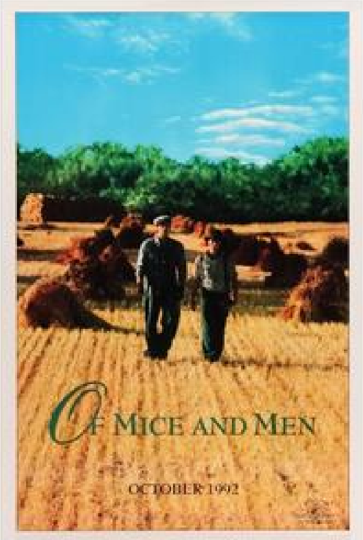
▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Copy and complete the table and list the different settings of each of the six sections which make up *Of Mice and Men*. Identify how Steinbeck lets the reader know when and where each section takes place. Comment on the mood and effect which is produced by each different setting. For example, is the feeling one of danger or happiness? Does the setting contrast strongly with the characters' actions?

▼ LOCATION AND TIME	▼ EVIDENCE	▼ COMMENT
1 The Salinas riverbank (Thursday evening)	'Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the evening... '	Feels beautiful and idyllic, a contrast with many of the unpleasant things which take place later on.
2 The bunk house (Friday morning, 10 a.m.)		
3 The bunk house (Friday evening, dusk)		
4 The harness room (Saturday night)		
5 The barn (Sunday afternoon)		
6 The Salinas riverbank (late Sunday afternoon)		

OTHER MEDIA

- Steinbeck originally meant *Of Mice and Men* to be a play rather than a novel and there are several versions available on film and television. Perhaps the most famous is the 1992 film starring John Malkovich as Lennie and Gary Sinise as George.



▲ The poster for the 1992 film version of *Of Mice and Men*

LANGUAGE

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

colloquially informally

USE OF COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE

The characters in this novel speak colloquially: their speech is typical of people at that time and in that place. Their language is not changed to suit a literary style. Steinbeck clearly understood the local speech patterns, mostly because of his experience of working on a ranch in the same district as the setting of the book. The use of this natural speech makes the words seem real and authentic. The characters speak simply, naturally and informally. This means the readers can 'hear' them very easily, as they would if they were watching a play or film. The roughness and simplicity of much of the language which the characters speak also contrasts with the language used by the narrator. This language is often beautiful and picturesque, particularly in the descriptions of nature at the start of different sections.

▶ **What impressions do you have about life on the ranch and the community living there?**

SHORT SENTENCES IN THE NARRATIVE

In the same way that the characters often use short sentences, the description from the narrator also uses this structure. Look at the following example.

> 'The silence fell on the room again. A minute passed, and then another minute. Candy lay still, staring at the ceiling.'

The effect here is to make the time pass very quickly. It is a frequently-used device, which you may be able to observe, writing down other examples and thinking about their effect.

▲ An American farm

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

HINT

Steinbeck's use of colloquial language can be linked to the context of the Great Depression as he is representing the language of farm workers who were displaced from their homes and transformed into migrants by poverty.

KEY POINT

Steinbeck's language contrasts the rough, simple language used by the characters with the often beautiful and eloquent descriptions provided by the narrator.

ACTIVITY 4 **A01** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Look closely at the way the characters speak and notice examples of colloquial speech. Make a list of what the characters say and write comments on the effect of the language they use. Look for:

- informal, non-standard grammar
- use of slang expressions
- use of unusual spelling to help the reader imagine the right sound
- simple, brief statements and questions, which reflect how people speak
- what these words and phrases say about the characters speaking them.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

slang informal language, often associated with a particular social group or class

FURTHER READING

If you choose to read any of these works, you should compare and contrast them with the piece you have studied and think about how they add to your understanding of it. You should think about language, style, format, themes, plot, characters and context.

- *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) by John Steinbeck.
- *Death of a Salesman* (1949) by Arthur Miller.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your response.

1 How are gender and masculinity important in *Of Mice and Men*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

2 Explore Steinbeck's presentation of Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

3 'I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you.' (George to Lennie).
Show how friendship is presented in the novel. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

4 'Trouble with mice is you always kill 'em.' (George to Lennie).
Discuss the importance of death in *Of Mice and Men*. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

5 Explore Steinbeck's presentation of Curley's wife in *Of Mice and Men*. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

5 Curley's wife is important in *Of Mice and Men* for being the only female character [1] in the novella. She is represented only as someone's spouse, and never given her own name and identity, suggesting the low status of women in 1930s America [2]. She is one of many lonely characters on the ranch, and her tragic death is the climax of the whole story. [3]

The first time that Steinbeck introduces Curley's wife, she is described as having 'full, rouged lips', and 'red fingernails'. Her glamorous appearance is juxtaposed [4] with the bare and masculine environment of the bunkhouse. It is possible that Steinbeck focuses on the colour red to symbolise [5] danger or a warning. Her flirtatious behaviour is a potential threat to the ranch hands, who are worried about being in trouble with Curley.

[1] AO1: It is a good idea to start with the character's role in the whole text, before going into detail.

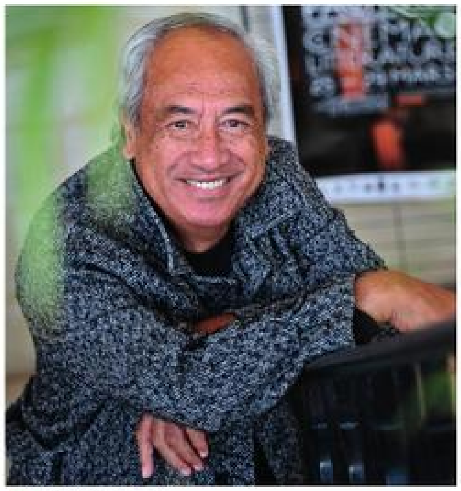
[2] AO4: Remember to include links to the historical context of the text.

[3] AO2: This comment shows that you are considering the whole text structure.

[4] AO2: Juxtaposition is a technique through which the writer creates a contrast between images or ideas. This language feature is good to comment on for AO2.

[5] AO2: Look out for the writer's use of symbolism – when an image or an idea takes on greater meaning.

THE WHALE RIDER
WITI IHIMAERA



Witi Ihimaera

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Witi Ihimaera is a **Maori** writer from New Zealand. His full name is Witi Tame Ihimaera-Smiler. Born in 1944, he became the first Maori writer to publish a collection of short stories and then the first to publish a novel. Ihimaera's first book was published in 1972 and was a collection of short stories called *Pounamu Pounamu*. It explored what it meant to be a New Zealander from a Maori perspective. The book was named after the Maori word for greenstone, a type of jade stone that is significant in Maori culture.

The Whale Rider was published in 1987 during a decade of increased concern about the state of the environment. Nuclear technology was a particular cause for concern, especially following the **Chernobyl nuclear disaster** in 1986, and the environmental organisation Greenpeace campaigned against nuclear power and nuclear weapons. In 1985, Greenpeace's ship, *Rainbow Warrior*, was sunk in **Auckland** harbour. It was sunk by the French secret service because of Greenpeace's anti-nuclear activism around French nuclear test sites in the South Pacific. Whales were also a key focus for environmentalists in the 1980s and in 1986 an international ban on commercial whaling was imposed.

- **Why do you think it took until 1972 for a Maori-authored book to be published?**

GENERAL VOCABULARY

Maori the indigenous (native) people of New Zealand; they are descended from Polynesian settlers who discovered New Zealand long before European explorers

Chernobyl nuclear disaster an explosion and fire at a power plant in Pripyat, Ukraine (then part of the USSR) that caused huge amounts of radioactive particles to be released into the atmosphere and surrounding area

Auckland the largest city in New Zealand, located on the country's North Island

moko Maori tattoo with great cultural significance

spears poles with a sharp pointed blade at one end, used as weapons in the past

descendants people who are related to a person who lived a long time ago, or to a family or group of people that existed in the past

PLOT

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

prologue the introduction to a play, long poem or novel

The **prologue** tells the story of Kahutia Te Rangi (or Paikea) arriving at Whangara. Paikea is one of the Maori Ancients and he rides to New Zealand (Aotearoa) on the back of a whale that wears a ***moko*** on its head. When Paikea comes within sight of land, he throws **spears** into the sea and towards the land; these turn into eels and pigeons that populate the land and the sea. However, the last spear will not fly. Paikea prays over it, dedicating it to the future when his **descendants** will be in great need, then throws it. The spear lands in the future, waiting until it is needed.

- **Investigate the significance of *tā moko* in Maori culture. Can you find out what the different patterns mean?**

GENERAL VOCABULARY

bull whale male whale
afterbirth the substance that comes out of female humans or animals just after they have had a baby
marae the sacred meeting area of a Maori settlement, used for tribal customs such as meetings and celebrations
orca killer whale
Moruroa an atoll in the Tuamoto Islands where France carried out its nuclear weapons tests
wharenui the carved meeting house found in the marae

The main story of the novel begins with a herd of whales off the coast of Patagonia in South America. The leader of the herd, an ancient **bull whale**, remembers being orphaned. After his mother died, he struck up a friendship with a human, his 'master', and the happy memories turn his thoughts to the islands of New Zealand.

In New Zealand, six years before the narrative's present day, a Maori couple had their first child; the story is narrated by the child's uncle, Rawiri. The child's great-grandfather, Koro Apinara,was the tribal chief, looking for a male successor. Because of this, he was annoyed that his eldest great-grandchild was a girl. Koro was further upset when the child was named Kahutia Te Rangi (Kahu), after the founder of their hometown, Whangara. However, the name was approved by his independent-minded wife, Nanny Flowers. Following tradition, Kahu's **afterbirth** was brought to Whangara to be buried in the ***marae***, but Koro refused to do it. Instead, Nanny Flowers and Rawiri buried the afterbirth themselves. As they left the *marae*, Rawiri saw something like a small spear land in the *marae*.

By now, the ancient bull whale and his herd are travelling towards Easter Island, watching out for humans and other dangers as they go. The bull whale remembers the time that his master became the whale rider.

While Kahu was still a baby, her mother died, so she was raised by her mother's family. However, every summer, she visited Whangara. She showed an immediate affection for Koro, although he wanted nothing to do with her, as well as a love of traditional Maori food. Around this time, Koro started to teach the younger men about the tribe's history and customs, such as the time when people could speak to whales. During the first lesson, the baby Kahu was found underneath the table, playing with Koro's feet.

When Kahu was two, Rawiri took her to the cinema and they saw a film about whale-hunting, which upset her. On their way home, they spotted **orcas** in the sea: Rawiri pointed them out to her, but was amazed when she gave a warning call to them and the orcas swam away. The following year, Koro told the young men a story about seeing whalers killing a whale. Kahu was secretly listening to the lesson and ran in to protest, giving herself away and making Koro angry with her. The next morning, Rawiri found Kahu alone on the beach, listening to the sea.

The herd of whales is now in a sea trench near Hawaiki, the home of the Ancients. They are mourning the deaths of some of their calves, who were killed by a nuclear test carried out on **Moruroa**. The bull whale is concerned about radiation and decides that they should go south to Antarctica immediately. The female whales are concerned, as this route will take them close to the 'dangerous islands' of New Zealand.

When Kahu was four, Rawiri decided to travel and went to Australia. When his flatmate Jeff's parents asked Jeff to go and help them on their coffee plantation in Papua New Guinea, Rawiri went with him. In Papua New Guinea, Rawiri discovered that he had much more in common with the 'natives' than with Jeff's parents and their wealthy friends. One evening, Jeff accidentally knocked down one of the 'native' workers on the plantation. Jeff and his parents left the man lying in the road, but Rawiri refused to leave him. After this, and after seeing a vision of a whale in the clouds, Rawiri realised that he should go home.

▲ The carving of Paikea on the *wharenui* in Whangara

Kahu is now six and living permanently with her father, Porourangi, in Whangara. When Rawiri returns from Papua New Guinea, he finds that Koro is still rejecting Kahu and searching for a male successor. Koro tests the boys by dropping a stone in the sea to see which of them could bring it back. None of them succeeds. When Kahu hears about the test, she brings back the stone with the help of some dolphins. This is witnessed by Nanny Flowers and Rawiri, who agree between them not to mention it to anyone else. Koro even refuses to attend Kahu's school break-up ceremony, at which she receives a prize for writing a Maori speech in praise of her beloved great-grandfather.

The final section of the novel begins with the whales arriving in Antarctica. The bull whale leads them away from Antarctica, towards New Zealand. Near Whangara, two hundred whales beach themselves. Rawiri and other young Maori men, alongside white New Zealanders, struggle to save the whales. The whales refuse to swim back out to sea and they all die.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

beach when a whale swims onto the shore and cannot get back in the water

comatose deeply unconscious, often caused by injuries or illnesses

The following night, the ancient bull whale appears off Whangara and beaches himself. Koro and the young men work to rescue him, but he refuses to be helped. Koro explains to the young men and to Kahu that if the whale dies, the tribe dies. Unseen by the others, Kahu slips into the water and introduces herself to the whale as Kahutia Te Rangi. Thinking she is Paikea, the whale lets her climb on to his back. She orders the whale to leave the beach and go on living, in order to let her tribe live, and they head back out to sea. Her horrified family are powerless to stop her. In tears, Nanny Flowers gives Koro the stone that Kahu retrieved. Koro finally recognises that Kahu is his true successor.

The epilogue describes the ancient whales' return into the past. The herd is greeted by the old mother whale, who persuades the ancient bull whale that Kahu is the last spear of Paikea and must be returned to land. Three days after her disappearance, Kahu is found floating in the ocean, comatose, and is taken to hospital. When Koro and Nanny Flowers visit her, she is still unconscious; Koro admits to Nanny Flowers that he was wrong. While Nanny Flowers is telling him off, Kahu comes round. Koro tells her that he loves her. Joyfully, Kahu tells him that she can hear the whales singing.

▶ **Who or what do the bull whale and old mother whale represent?**

ACTIVITY 1 **A01** **A02** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

The Whale Rider is divided into four sections: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. Summarise what happens in each section and identify the key theme or themes in each section. Why do you think Ihimaera divided the story in this way? Why do you think he chose to name the sections after the seasons?

CHARACTERS

GENERAL VOCABULARY

founded started something
throwback someone with characteristics of their ancestors or of a previous age

KAHU

- named after Kahutia Te Rangi, the whale rider who founded Whangara
- dearly loves her great-grandfather, Koro Apinara
- raised by her mother's family after the death of her mother, Rehua
- moved to Whangara aged six to live with her father, Porourangi
- loves Maori food, culture and language (a 'throwback', according to Nanny Flowers)
- speaks with whales, dolphins and orcas

OTHER MEDIA

- Overview of Maori Culture (search terms).
- *Whale Rider*, a 2002 film based on the novel, written and directed by Niki Caro.
- Video featuring Witi Ihimaera on his inspiration for the novel (search terms).

KORO APINARA

- chief of the tribe and Kahu's great-grandfather
- nicknamed *Paka* by several family members, including Kahu
- searching for a boy in Kahu's generation to succeed him and Porourangi as chief
- disappointed that Porourangi keeps having daughters rather than sons
- angry that Porourangi and Nanny Flowers named Kahu after the whale rider, Paikea
- dismissive of Kahu and her attempts to win his affection and respect
- worried about the future of the tribe
- eventually sees the error of his ways and accepts Kahu as his successor

RAWIRI

- narrates most of the novel
- appointed as one of Kahu's guardians by Nanny Flowers
- helped put Kahu's afterbirth in the ground of the *marae*
- travels to Australia and Papua New Guinea, where he gains a deeper understanding of his Maori identity

REHUA

- Kahu's mother
- Porourangi's first wife
- chose to name Kahu after the founder of Whangara to connect her with her father's tribe
- died when Kahu was three months old

NANNY FLOWERS

- Koro Apinara's wife and Kahu's great-grandmother
- always arguing with Koro Apinara
- descended from strong Maori women such as Muriwai and Mihi Kotukutuku
- really named Putiputi, which is Maori for 'flowers'
- allows Porourangi to name Kahu after the whale rider, Paikea
- certain that Kahu will eventually make Koro Apinara see the error of his ways

▲ *Tā moko* is the Maori tradition of tattooing, especially on the face

KAHUTIA TE RANGI (PAIKEA)

- the whale rider
- one of the Ancients, a group of Polynesians who were the ancestors of the Maori and who settled Aotearoa (New Zealand) long before European explorers
- founder of Whangara

POROURANGI

- Kahu's father
- chosen by Koro Apinara as his successor to become chief
- married to Rehua, who died when Kahu was still a baby
- remarried to Ana, with whom he has a second daughter, Putiputi
- worried about the future of the tribe

THE ANCIENT BULL WHALE

- the whale who swam with Kahutia Te Rangi
- obsessed by his memories
- returns to New Zealand on his 'last journey'
- beaches himself at Whanagara, but is persuaded to leave by Kahu
- representative of Koro Apinara and attitudes toward tradition and the past

THE ANCIENT MOTHER WHALE

- the ancient bull whale's mate
- persuades the ancient bull whale that Kahu must be returned to the land
- representative of Nanny Flowers and attitudes toward the future

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **A02** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, INTERPRETATION

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Do you think Kahu's character develops as the novel progresses? How does she change? Make a list of three of the events leading up to the arrival of the ancient whales that are significant in shaping Kahu's character.

THEMES

THE NATURAL WORLD

The relationship between humans and the natural world is a key theme of *The Whale Rider*. The ancient whales are cautious of humans, who they see as 'the greatest threat of all', but they remember that it had not always been like that. Similarly, the Maori stories told by Rawiri and Koro Apinara recall a time of 'helpful partnership' and 'oneness' between humans and the natural world.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

inverts turns upside down

harpoon a sharp missile, attached to a rope, which can be thrown by hand or shot from a gun; it is used for hunting large sea creatures

However, as Rawiri explains, the relationship between humans and the natural world was broken when people started to kill whales. This **inverts** the story of Paikea and his happy partnership with the whale. For example, when Koro Apinara tells the story of the whaling ship, he remembers that the whalers shot **harpoons** at the whale to capture and kill it. In comparison, the spears that Paikea threw from the ancient bull whale's back became part of the living world, turning into eels and pigeons. The whalers' harpoons are implements of death, while Paikea's spears were implements of life.

▲ A whale

The novel suggests that the relationship between human and nature has become a fight. When Rawiri travels to Papua New Guinea, he describes his relationship with the natural world there as a battle; he says that he had never known a country fight back as hard as Papua New Guinea. His experience on the coffee plantation makes him realise that the natural world is more powerful than humans and will always defeat human attempts to tame it.

Kahu is clearly closer to the natural world than other people. She is repeatedly compared with things from nature, especially from the sea, such as seagulls and dolphins. She is also capable of conversing with dolphins, orcas and whales and is deeply upset by the killing of whales. Nanny Flowers says that Kahu is a 'throwback' because she only likes traditional Maori food, but as the novel progresses the reader comes to understand that she is not just a throwback in terms of her tastes but also in terms of her 'oneness' with the natural world, particularly with the sea.

The sound of the sea is important throughout the novel. Characters frequently listen to the sea or hear it at significant moments. For example, at the end of 'Summer: Halcyon's Flight', Rawiri hears the sound of the sea while he is listening to Nanny Flowers promising Kahu that she will 'fix' Koro Apinara. Another example occurs when Rawiri is in Papua New Guinea. He is sitting on the beach, listening to the sound of the sea in a shell when Jeff observes that he is missing Whangara. This suggests strong, almost familial links between Whangara, the tribe and the sea.

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

The Maori language is a vital part of the setting of *The Whale Rider*. The first few paragraphs describing the natural world that Paikea finds when he lands on New Zealand are full of Maori names, including the *tuatara* (a lizard), the *tarawhai* (stingray) and the *pohutukawa* (an evergreen tree).

Maori language is also a vital element of Kahu's identity. It forms part of a key moment in the relationship between Koro Apinara and Kahu: the school break-up ceremony which Koro refuses to attend. At this event, Kahu receives a prize for writing and giving a speech in Maori, praising Koro and **reciting** his ***whakapapa***. The head teacher, who awards the prize, says that it is 'remarkable' that she did this entirely in the Maori language, again reminding the reader that she is a 'throwback'. Kahu kept this as a 'surprise' for her great-grandfather, implying that she thought that it would please him and suggesting that Koro and Kahu both consider the Maori language to be crucial to Maori tribal identity.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

reciting saying a poem or piece of literature that has been learned for people to listen to

whakapapa the Maori recitation of genealogy or line of ancestors

slaughtered killed, especially for meat

Kahu also communicates silently with Koro Apinara, but he refuses to understand the message she is giving him, just as he fails to listen when she speaks. For example, when she is a baby and bites Koro's toe, Rawiri observes that 'her eyes seemed to say, "Don't think you're leaving *me* out of this."' Later on, when she is older and Koro tells her to go away, Rawiri again understands that the look on her face means, '"You just wait, *Paka*, you just wait."' However, Koro does not appear to understand these messages.

Indeed, Kahu's communication with Koro is always one-way. They do speak directly to one another, but rarely reply directly to one another: Kahu often speaks to Koro and is ignored, or Koro tells Kahu to go away and she obeys. Frequently, Koro speaks about Kahu as though she is not present, asking Nanny Flowers to keep 'that kid' away from the beach or the meeting house rather than asking her himself. The first time that they have a real conversation with one another is in the epilogue, when Koro truly listens to what Kahu is saying and asks her to explain what she means.

The most significant communication in the novel, however, is that between Kahu and the natural world. What truly identifies her as a worthy successor to Koro is her ability to communicate with whales, orcas and dolphins. In this way, she embodies their ancestors' 'oneness' with nature, which has since been lost. Indeed, in comparison with Koro who, as a child, did not feel empathy for the **slaughtered** whales and who cannot persuade the ancient bull whale to live, it seems that Kahu will in some ways be a more fitting leader for the tribe.

IDENTITY

One of the key problems for the tribe in *The Whale Rider* is preserving their identity while also being part of a modern New Zealand. In one of his letters to Rawiri, Porourangi asks, 'Will we have prepared the people to cope with the new challenges and the new technology? And will they still be Maori?'. This suggests that he fears that a Maori identity cannot continue to exist in the modern world.

When Rawiri meets other Maori in Australia, they ask him not to tell Nanny Flowers and Koro about the life that they are living in Sydney. They wanted to maintain the respect in which the tribe held them, implying that the tribe would not respect their choice to live Westernised non-Maori lives. However, Rawiri observes that, after spending some time with them, their 'memories would come seeping through' and they would start to ask him about everyone back home in Whangara. This suggests that their tribal identity is still there, underneath the fishnet stockings and dyed hair.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

genealogy the line of descent between ancestors and their descendants

Individual identity is also significant, although it is based on tribal identity and tribal history. It is also founded upon a strong sense of geographical place and belonging. When Kahu is taken to be brought up by her late mother's family, Rawiri admires Rehua's wisdom in naming Kahu after Paikea and as a result, 'joining her' to her tribe's lands. Explaining the tribe's genealogy, Rawiri says:

> Our genealogy, of course, is the genealogy of the people of Te Tai Rawhiti, the people of the East Coast.

The novel suggests that there is no Maori identity that is not based on the community surrounding each individual. This implies that Koro cannot truly exclude Kahu: she is part of the tribe and is therefore as much a part of his identity as he is a part of hers.

EQUALITY

Kahu's right to take leadership of the tribe is both asserted and questioned throughout the novel. It is questioned most aggressively by Koro Apinara, whose very first words are, 'A *girl*. I will have nothing to do with her. She has broken the male line of descent in our tribe.' Throughout the novel, Koro is certain that women do not have power and should not be included in sacred tribal matters.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrative the story or plot

In comparison, Kahu's right to lead the tribe is most fiercely asserted by Nanny Flowers. Right from the start of Rawiri's narrative, it is made clear that Nanny Flowers is a powerful force in the tribe. She says of Koro, 'He isn't any chief. I'm his chief.' and her actions seem to back up her conviction. References are made to the strong women in Nanny Flowers's ancestry, such as Mihi, who asserted her seniority over a chief, and Muriwai, who took the place of a man to save some of her tribe from drowning.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

lineage direct biological ancestry

The conflict between the perceived importance of male lineage and the rights of women is partially represented in the novel as a conflict between tradition and modernity. When Koro is angry that Porourangi has had a second daughter, Nanny Flowers argues, 'Girls can do anything these days. Haven't you heard you're not allowed to discriminate against women anymore?'. In some ways, as outlined above, characters fear that embracing modernity could lead to a loss of Maori identity. However, by emphasising Kahu's 'throwback' qualities and her dedication to Maori culture, the novel suggests that altering traditions will not necessarily cause the tribe to lose their Maori identity. Indeed, by referring to the male-only lessons as 'the Ku Klux Klan', Nanny Flowers draws a comparison between Koro's discrimination against Kahu and racism, suggesting that it is unacceptable even if it is 'traditional'.

ACTIVITY 3 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ CHARACTER RELATIONSHIPS

'We don't argue… *He* argues, and *I* win.' Describe the relationship between Koro Apinara and Nanny Flowers. Do you think it is significant that they disagree so often? Is their relationship different in the epilogue? If so, how?

AUTHOR'S CRAFT

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

motif a dominant thought or idea that reappears throughout a piece of literature

REPEATED MOTIFS

Ihimaera uses motifs and repeated images to reinforce the themes of *The Whale Rider*. The most notable of these motifs is the Maori phrase '*hui e, haumi e, taiki e*', which means 'join everything together, bind it together, let it be done'. This reminds the reader of the broken relationship between humanity and nature: the 'oneness' that is lacking in the modern world. Its repeated appearance also reminds the reader of the importance of the Maori language in this novel.

The image of spears is a recurring image of great significance. Throughout the novel, Ihimaera includes echoes of Paikea's spears, such as on the several occasions that Rawiri observes spear-like rain. When Koro tells the story of the whale hunt, this motif is inverted and directed against the whales in the form of harpoons, emphasising the loss of 'oneness' with the marine world.

▲ A New Zealand beach

Another repeated motif is Koro's catchphrase, '*Te mea te mea*,' which means, 'yeah, yeah'. He uses this repeatedly against Nanny Flowers when defying her wishes. However, midway through the novel, when Koro announces that women have no power, Nanny Flowers surprises everyone by using '*Te mea te mea*' against him. This inverted motif draws the reader's attention and suggests that the balance of power is shifting in Nanny Flowers's favour.

OBSERVATION OF PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

Ihimaera uses Rawiri's experience of travelling abroad as a means of exploring Maori identity from outside the confines of New Zealand. It is in Papua New Guinea that Rawiri comes to understand his Maori identity more than he ever had before. He sees parallels between the experiences of Papuan and Maori people, especially regarding the difficulties of coming to terms with the modern world and the expectation that tribal people should make the leap 'from loincloth to the three-piece suit and computer knowledge in a simple step'. This experience seems to represent the transition between childhood and adulthood: 'I grew into an understanding of myself as a Maori,' he says.

The Whale Rider is not overtly concerned with racism, but Rawiri's experiences in Papua New Guinea also shine a light on what it is like to be different. His first impression of Jeff's mother is that she considers him 'too dark' and she clearly disapproves of Jeff's friendship with him, rudely observing that Jeff always brings home 'dogs and strays'. Rawiri gets on better with Jeff's father, Tom, but the fact that Tom is partially blind is significant, emphasising that superficial visual differences are a basis for many racist opinions.

ACTIVITY 4 **A01** **A02** **A04** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

▼ IDENTITY

Find the passage in 'Winter: Whale Song, Whale Rider' that begins 'Koro Apinara took us for prayers.' Reread it up to 'Okay then, boys. Let's go down there and get on with it.' What is the importance of this passage? What does it tell the reader about the tribe's Maori identity?

LANGUAGE

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

simile similar to a metaphor, a description that says that an object is *like* an image rather than that *it is* the image

SIMILES

Similes are used throughout *The Whale Rider* to draw attention to Ihimaera's chosen themes and to create repeated motifs. Kahu is 'like a dolphin' and 'like a seagull' and the use of these similes emphasises her connection with nature. Similarly, when Rawiri describes the rain falling 'like spears', this reminds the reader of the significant image of the spear.

TENSE

Most of Rawiri's narrative is written in the past tense. However, very occasionally, Ihimaera switches to present tense for stylistic effect. One example is when the whales beach themselves on Wainui beach. A group of men is captured on camera cutting the jaw off a still-living whale with a chainsaw. The three paragraphs describing this are written in the present tense, emphasising the immediacy of the horror that Rawiri feels when he remembers the sight: 'The whale is still alive… The men are laughing as they wrench the jaw from the butchered whale.'

SUSPENSE

From the beginning of Rawiri's narrative, the reader is told that Kahu is a significant person in the lives of her tribe: 'it was Kahu who was there at the end,' he says, 'and it was Kahu's intervention which perhaps saved us all'. However, the reader is not told why it is that Kahu is so significant, nor what will happen 'at the end'. This gives the narrative an edge of suspense and keeps the reader hooked, wanting to know how Kahu has such a huge impact on her tribe.

ACTIVITY 5 **A01** **A02** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ THE WHALES' STORY

Re-read the four italicised sections about the journey of the whales. What is the point of including these sections in *The Whale Rider*? Would the novel work without the inclusion of the whales' story?

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

magic realism	a literary genre that combines realistic plot with supernatural elements
post-colonial literatures	literature written about countries and cultures which are, or had been, subject to colonisation, usually by European countries and Britain in particular; post-colonial writers often come from heavily colonised regions such as Africa, India or Ireland

Writers can use magic realism to make points about politics or history that might be easier to accept and understand when depicted in non-literal or fantastical ways. Magic realism is seen in many post-colonial literatures, particularly in Latin America.

Do you think *The Whale Rider* can be described as magic realism? Do you think that the term adds anything to your understanding of the text? Or do you think that it might be restrictive to think of a text as being a particular genre?

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A01 **A02** **A04**

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your response.

1 'I'll be like Muriwai if I have to. Kahu, also, if she has to be.' What is the significance of Muriwai's story to Kahu's role in the tribe? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

2 How does Ihimaera present the sea in *The Whale Rider*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

3 Why does Ihimaera chose to tell Kahu's story from Rawiri's point of view? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

4 How does the relationship between Koro Apinara and Kahu represent different attitudes between generations? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

5 How is the theme of environmentalism explored in *The Whale Rider*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

5 Environmentalism plays a central role within Ihimaera's story in a number of ways. Similes are used throughout [1], comparing characters and locations to natural features. Describing Kahu as a character so at home in a natural setting and 'like a dolphin' acts to show her close ties with the environment and its value to both her and Maori culture [2]. Kahu is a character closely tied to ideas of environmentalism [3] through her ability to talk to animals and fully appreciate the world around her. At the end of the story [4], the narrator says 'She was going with the whales into the sea and the rain' showing her commitment to the environment.

[1] A02: Use of key term shows focus on language.

[2] A02: This is a good example of how to link exploration of language to the text's context.

[3] A04: This comment links a character to a theme in the text, demonstrating further contextual understanding.

[4] A02: By referring to the ending, this answer is beginning to show some understanding of structure. This could be expanded to discuss how Kahu's character develops at key stages in the story.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB
AMY TAN

▲ Amy Tan

GENERAL VOCABULARY

mahjong a Chinese game played with pieces called tiles

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Amy Tan was born in the USA in 1952 and grew up in California. Her parents, John and Daisy Tan, were immigrants from China and part of a group of friends that they called the Joy Luck Club. Daisy Tan's stories of her own life in China inspired her daughter, Amy, to write her first novel, *The Joy Luck Club*. The story is set in San Francisco in the 1980s. It is made up of 16 interwoven stories about the lives of four Chinese women and their four American-born daughters.

The Joy Luck Club has an unusual structure, being divided into four separate parts, each of which is then divided into a further four sections. The four sections of each part are told by two mothers and two daughters. In this way the story cleverly mirrors the structure of the game of mahjong, which is at the centre of the book. In the same way that the characters are united by the game, the different sections of the plot are united by the structure which the game provides. Indeed, one of the major themes of *The Joy Luck Club* is overcoming borders: borders between nationalities, between generations, between family members who have never met before and even between the living and the dead. The novel's ingenious structure provides a way for the differences between different characters' stories to be maintained while still unifying those differences into a single unit.

The Joy Luck Club has achieved great success and fame, and in 1993 was adapted into a Hollywood film.

KEY POINT

Amy Tan uses a highly original and ingenious structure in *The Joy Luck Club*, which links the novel's plot to the game of mahjong which the characters play.

ACTIVITY 1 **A04** **SKILLS** PROBLEM SOLVING, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

▼ THE TEXT IN CONTEXT

Differences between Chinese and American cultures is one of the central themes of *The Joy Luck Club*. Often, these differences are shown in the relationships between mothers and daughters. Make a list of the points where the attitudes of mothers and daughters directly contrast each other, using the following table and providing evidence in each case.

DID YOU KNOW?
Although *The Joy Luck Club* has generally been very well received, particularly in the West, it has also been said by some Asian critics to rely on racist stereotypes, such as Asian Americans not being able to read and Asian men not treating women well.

▼ DAUGHTER'S ATTITUDE	▼ MOTHER'S ATTITUDE
As a child, Jing-mei thinks she should be free to act independently, watching TV rather than continuing to learn the piano.	Her mother, Suyuan, thinks she should be an obedient daughter and continue with her piano lessons.

PLOT

After her mother's death in 1980s San Francisco, Jing-mei 'June' Woo is invited to attend a meeting of the Joy Luck Club, a group of her parents' friends who play mahjong together. The other women present are Jing-mei's 'aunties': An-mei Hsu, Lindo Jong and Ying-ying St. Clair.

Jing-mei's relationship with her mother, Suyuan, was difficult, and she feels that she had never known her mother properly. However, Jing-mei knows that Suyuan had had twin daughters in China, whom she had been forced to abandon when fleeing the Japanese invasion during the Second World War. She had never been able to find them and did not know whether they had survived. However, after her death, Suyuan's friends had managed to get in touch with them. Jing-mei's aunties ask her to go and meet her half-sisters and she promises to do so.

An-mei was raised in China by her grandmother. Her mother had dishonoured the family by remarrying after her husband's death and An-mei was forbidden to even say her name. When An-mei's grandmother fell ill and died, her mother returned to take An-mei back. An-mei discovered that her mother was tricked into remarrying: her husband, Wu Tsing, raped her and made her pregnant, which meant she was forced to marry him. When she had his son, Wu Tsing's second wife claimed the child as her own. Not long after An-mei's discovery, her mother killed herself, timing it to protect her daughter as best as she could. Only at that moment, An-mei learned to speak up for herself. Years later, in the 1980s, when An-mei's daughter Rose says that she has no choice but to go along with her husband's intention to get a divorce, An-mei advises Rose to speak up for herself.

▶ **Early in An-mei's life, she was forbidden to say her mother's name. Does the reader ever find out what her mother is called? Do you think this is significant?**

GENERAL VOCABULARY
betrothed formally engaged to be married

As a young child, Lindo was **betrothed** to Tyan-yu, the son of the wealthy Huang family. When her own family was ruined by a flood, she was sent to live with the Huangs and was treated like a servant until she married. The marriage ceremony centred on the lighting of a two-ended candle; however, during the night, Lindo blew out Tyan-yu's end of the candle. Eventually, she escaped by convincing her in-laws that their ancestors had visited her to tell her the marriage was doomed. The Huangs released her, giving her enough money to go to America, where she met An-mei. Now, many years later, she decides she must tell her daughter Waverly the whole truth about herself and her life in China.

Ying-ying was born into a wealthy family and, at sixteen, was married to an older man. While she was pregnant with his first child, he left her for someone else. In revenge, she aborted the unborn child and left her in-laws' house. Eventually, she moved back to Shanghai and took work as a shop girl, where she met an American called Clifford St. Clair. When he asks Ying-ying to marry him, she does, letting him believe that he was saving her from a poor village existence; this is the story passed on to their daughter, Lena. Years later, when Ying-ying visits Lena's new house, she realises that she must tell her daughter the true story of her life.

An-mei's daughter, Rose, is getting divorced. Her relationship with her husband Ted was unequal, with Ted making all the decisions and then leaving her with the intention of remarrying. When Rose was a child, her little brother, Bing, drowned on a beach while she was looking after him; she felt responsible for his death even though her parents did not blame her. She now expects her mother to tell her to save her marriage, but instead An-mei advises her to speak up for herself. Rose takes her mother's advice by refusing to go along with Ted's decisions any longer and choosing to contest the divorce.

Lindo's daughter, Waverly, is about to marry for the second time. As a child, she was a champion chess player. Her mother was very proud of her achievements; as Waverly saw it, Lindo tried to take the credit for her daughter's success. Waverly argued with her mother over this and refused to play chess for a while. When she then returned to chess, she found that she was no longer as confident as before. Later, Waverly wonders whether Lindo's pickiness about her first husband, Marvin, poisoned their marriage. Expecting the same thing to happen with her second marriage, she interprets her mother's every comment about her fiancé, Rich, as a personal attack. However, when she confronts her mother about this, she comes to understand that Lindo is not her opponent but is waiting to be accepted.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

contest to say formally that you do not accept something or do not agree with it
pickiness the quality of only liking particular things and not others, and so not being easy to please
anorexia an eating disorder in which the sufferer refuses to eat enough or anything at all

Ying-ying's daughter, Lena, is unhappily married. Her relationship with her husband, Harold, is superficially fair and equal, with shared bills split down the middle, but she only eats salads when they eat out and shares the cost of ice cream that she does not eat. Lena's history of anorexia is linked to her mother's declaration that she would marry a bad man if she did not finish her dinner. Lena thought she knew which boy her mother meant and refused to eat anything, with the intention that it would bring illness upon him. Later, when the boy died, Lena blamed herself. As a punishment, she ate huge quantities of ice cream to the point of being sick and created a lifelong hatred of ice cream. Now, when Ying-ying visits, she sees Lena and Harold's list of shared costs and points out how unfair it is that ice cream is listed, given that Lena cannot eat it. Lena realises the ways in which her 'fair' marriage is not fair.

Jing-mei and her father go to China to meet her half-sisters. Her father tells Jing-mei her mother's story, explaining the meaning of the names that Suyuan gave her and her half-sisters; Jing-mei realises how much she never knew about her mother. The novel ends when Jing-mei meets her half-sisters at Shanghai airport and realises that all three of them look like Suyuan.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

In *The Joy Luck Club*, storytelling has several purposes besides simply conveying information. For what other purposes is the act of storytelling used in the novel?

CHARACTERS

SUYUAN WOO

- Jing-mei's mother, who is no longer alive
- the missing member of the Joy Luck Club
- had twin daughters whom she had to abandon in China during the Second World War
- met her second husband, Jing-mei's father, in China and emigrated to America with him
- gave Jing-mei a green jade pendant which she calls her 'life's importance'

GENERAL VOCABULARY

long-standing having continued or existed for a long time

JING-MEI 'JUNE' WOO

- Suyuan's daughter
- played the piano as a child to please her mother
- has a long-standing rivalry with Waverly Jong
- has two Chinese half-sisters, Chwun Yu and Chwun Hwa
- has a name meaning 'pure essence'-'younger sister'

LINDO JONG

- Waverly's mother
- fears being forgotten by her daughter and granddaughter
- betrothed as a very young child and married at sixteen
- escaped her first marriage using her ingenuity and emigrated to America where she met her second husband
- gave Waverly a red jade pendant during a chess championship for luck

▲ What is the significance of chess in *The Joy Luck Club*?

WAVERLY JONG

- Lindo's daughter
- was a champion chess player as a child
- has a daughter, Shoshana
- divorced and now engaged to marry a different man
- named after the street where she grew up, Waverly Place

AN-MEI HSU

- Rose's mother
- raised by her grandmother in China because of her mother's 'dishonour'
- her mother killed herself when An-mei was a child
- criticised by Suyuan for being 'without wood' in her character: indecisive and too willing to listen to others

ROSE HSU JORDAN

- An-mei's daughter
- sure that she was responsible for the death of her little brother, Bing
- asked for a divorce by her husband, Ted
- passive in her relationship with Ted, allowing him to make decisions
- told by her mother that she was born 'without wood' in her character

DID YOU KNOW?
In the Chinese calendar, each year is assigned to one of 12 animals in a repeating cycle. The attributes of the animal assigned to the year in which you were born are believed to determine your character.

YING-YING ST. CLAIR

- Lena's mother
- born in the Year of the Tiger
- had an abortion in China after her first husband left her
- married an American called Clifford St. Clair with whom she emigrated to America
- has a name meaning 'clear reflection'

LENA ST. CLAIR

- Ying-ying's daughter
- born in the Year of the Tiger, like her mother
- half-Chinese, half-American
- has a supposedly equal marriage with her husband, Harold
- thinks that her mother can foresee things that will happen in the future

▶ **Ying-ying and Lena were both born in the Year of the Tiger. Find out which other animals are included in the Chinese calendar. Which animal are you?**

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION

▼ CONSIDERING THE CHARACTERS

Choose two characters: one of the older women and one of the daughters. They do not have to be mother and daughter: for example, you could choose Rose and Lindo. Identify the similarities and differences in their lives, and see which themes occur in both their stories. Try this again with another pairing. Do any common features emerge which are shared by either the mothers or the daughters?

▼ TWO CHARACTERS	▼ SIMILARITIES	▼ DIFFERENCES	▼ COMMON THEME
Rose and Lindo			

HINT
The Joy Luck Club has a particularly complicated plot. It is worth the effort to memorise the stories of all the different characters and how they link together. A strong understanding of this will be very useful in the exam.

THEMES

MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships between mothers and their daughters is the key theme of *The Joy Luck Club*. Tan was inspired to write the book by her relationship with her own mother. The novel's structure shows the central importance of this theme by framing the daughters' chapters within their mothers' chapters, showing that the stories of the younger generation only make sense within the context of their mothers' stories.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

omens signs of what will happen in the future

All four of the daughters' relationships with their mothers are sometimes difficult and stressful. According to Jing-mei, Waverly, Lena and Rose, their mothers had unrealistically high expectations for them, tried to control their choices and saw bad omens in everything. It is only in light of their mothers' stories that these tendencies make sense.

For much of the novel, none of the daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* truly know their mothers or their mothers' stories. This is as true of the older generation as it is of the younger generation: for example, An-mei believed that her mother was a thoughtless woman, but found that this was wrong when she got to know her. Similarly, the younger women's ideas of their mothers are wrong: for example, Lena's incorrect understanding of Ying-ying as weak and passive and Waverly's inaccurate retelling of her mother's stories.

The stories cannot resolve themselves until the older women tell their stories or give advice that is true to their hearts and until the younger women realise that they do not really know their mothers. This helps the daughters: it makes Waverly realise that her mother is not her opponent, it gives Rose the strength to fight her divorce and it shows Lena that her marriage is not what she thought it was. For Jing-mei, however, this comes too late. Her mother has already died, and so she must learn her mother's story from her father.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sympathetic applied to a character in fiction, this means a character who is liked by the reader or other characters

▶ **Tan presents Lindo and Suyuan in particular as having high expectations of their daughters. How sympathetic do you think you are supposed to feel towards the mothers? Does this change as the novel progresses?**

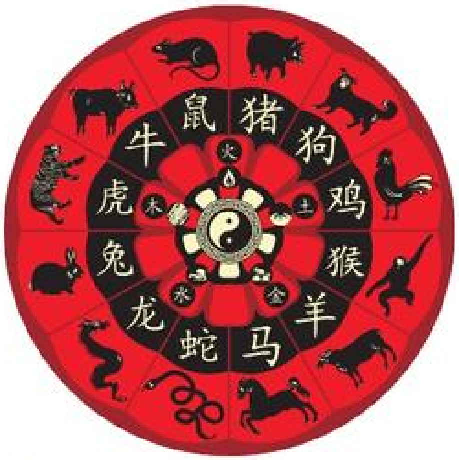
▲ San Francisco

BELONGING AND IDENTITY

Each of the stories within *The Joy Luck Club* describes a woman finding her true self, her voice and her strength, often in opposition to the wishes of husbands and mother figures. When Lindo found her own voice, she defeated her mother-in-law and husband and escaped her first marriage. Similarly, An-mei reflects that when she 'learned to shout', it was at the expense of Wu Tsing's second wife.

The younger generation also face a struggle to assert themselves as independent people. Both Waverly and Jing-mei struggle against their mothers' expectations, while Lena and Rose struggle to assert themselves in the face of their husbands' wishes. Indeed, Rose fails to assert herself against her mother-in-law and passively allows her husband to struggle against his mother for her. At the end of her story, Rose follows her mother's advice and, like An-mei, learns to 'shout' by taking the divorce to court.

However, the daughters' identities are all bound up with their mothers' identities. The importance of this is reinforced by the fact that the novel ends on Jing-mei's realisation that she and her half-sisters 'look like [their] mother'. Similarly, Lena and Ying-ying share their identity as Tigers, as they were both born in the Year of the Tiger. However, because Lena is half-Chinese and half-



The Chinese zodiac

American, her identity is more obviously blurred than anyone else's identity. Ying-ying scolds her by asking, 'Why do you Americans have only these morbid thoughts in your mind?', while Lena says that her only visible difference from other American girls is the fact that she has 'Chinese eyes'. This even leads to Ying-ying being mistaken for her maid, rather than her mother.

Names are also significant throughout the novel. On Ying-ying's immigration papers, Clifford St. Clair renames her 'Betty St. Clair' and gets her date of birth wrong. This leads Lena to reflect that, 'with the sweep of a pen, [her] mother lost her name and became a Dragon instead of a Tiger.' It is only through reading Ying-ying's story in her own words that the reader comes to realise that being a Tiger is central to her sense of identity. She also explains that Ying-ying means 'clear reflection', and that she was named this because she was so similar to her own mother. Similarly, the meaning of Jing-mei's name is highly significant in light of Suyuan's story, but Jing-mei was unaware of this significance until after her death, when she asked her father what her name really meant.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

Are the issues surrounding identity and belonging in *The Joy Luck Club* primarily the consequence of immigration from one culture to another, or are they more related to the mother-daughter relationship?

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

The two different generations are trapped between their first languages and speak 'in translation'. For example, Lena translates for Ying-ying but also adds things in or leaves things out, preventing trouble in case of cultural misunderstandings or to avoid hurting people's feelings. This helps to remind the reader that every one of the characters is caught between a Chinese tradition and the reality of life in America.

This problem is particularly important when it comes to the older women's stories. For example, Waverly does not tell her mother's story accurately, which makes Lindo resolve to tell her story for herself. However, even when she does this, her daughter mishears 'Taiyuan' as 'Taiwan' and incorrectly interprets her mother's past yet again. Lindo corrects her and then continues by saying 'Now listen… ', because listening is vital to the resolution of their relationship.

HINT

Talking about the problem of language and communication in the novel is a good way to respond to AO2: 'Analyse the language, form and structure used by the writer to create meanings and effects'. This will enable you to access higher marks in your answer.

Communications do not only come in the form of spoken or written language. For example, Suyuan gives Jing-mei a jade pendant, her 'life's importance', which Suyuan says will communicate how to 'know [her] meaning'. At first, Jing-mei misinterprets the meaning of this pendant, assuming that her mother only gave it to her out of pity, but its true meaning becomes clear when Jing-mei's father explains her and her half-sisters' names.

- **What is the significance of the green jade pendant?**

GHOSTS AND VISIONS

In *The Joy Luck Club*, women are often depicted as ghosts. As a small child, An-mei thinks of her mother as a ghost, because she was a forbidden topic of conversation. Similarly, after Ying-ying loses the baby who would have been Lena's little brother, Lena thinks of her mother as a living ghost, present as a conspicuous absence, even while she is resting in bed. However, some ghosts in *The Joy Luck Club* are powerful forces. For example, it is only after her death, as a ghost who could potentially haunt the superstitious Wu Tsing, that An-mei's mother has any real influence over his actions.

KEY POINT

The Joy Luck Club begins with many problems that need to be overcome. These problems include the relationships between mothers and daughters, the issue of belonging and the issue of language. Notice how the act of storytelling, and therefore the form of the novel itself, plays a key role in resolving these problems.

Dreams and visions are also represented as being both oppressive and empowering. When An-mei says that she knows how it is to live life as a dream, passively watching life happening rather than living it, the reader infers that she is thinking of her mother. In comparison, Rose's story ends with a triumphant dream in which her strength is represented by the weeds growing in the garden that Ted used to maintain. Similarly, Lindo also uses the power of visions by inventing the dream in which the Huangs' ancestors tell her that her marriage to Tyan-yu is doomed: she uses this power to her advantage, escaping her first marriage and leaving China for America.

▶ **What do you think is the significance of the fairy tale-style parables that introduce each group of stories?**

AUTHOR'S CRAFT

GENERAL VOCABULARY

doomed	certain to fail, die or be destroyed
recurs	happens again

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

parable	a simple story told to teach a lesson, often a moral lesson
omniscient	knowing everything within the world of the novel or play, including the secrets of all the characters and what the future holds
narrator	a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

NARRATIVE VOICES

The Joy Luck Club does not have a single omniscient narrator. Instead, it is narrated in the first person by its eight main characters. This is significant because none of the older generation speak fluent English and their daughters often translate for them. In the written narrative, however, the mothers are in control of their own stories and can speak for themselves. For example, Lindo regrets that, when Waverly tells the story of her mother's arrival in America, she tells it inaccurately. However, she then tells it herself directly in the narrative, in the way she wants it to be told.

First-person narrative also allows for the use of dramatic irony.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrative	the story or plot
dramatic irony	a device, used in novels, plays, poetry and films, where the audience knows something about a situation that the character (or characters) involved does not
motif	a dominant thought or idea that reappears throughout a piece of literature

ACTIVITY 3 **A02** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

The Joy Luck Club is made up of four groups of stories: 'Feathers from a Thousand *Li* Away', 'The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates', 'American Translation' and 'Queen Mother of the Western Skies'. Why do you think Tan grouped those particular stories together? Identify a key theme for each group of four.

REPEATED MOTIFS

Tan uses a number of repeated motifs in *The Joy Luck Club*. One example is the way in which the image of wind recurs throughout the book; Tan uses this image to communicate hidden strength. Another example is the recurrence of the jade pendant. The pendants signify communication between mothers and their children, but the children often misinterpret or fail to understand this communication. In this way, the motif of the jade pendant echoes the difficulty that the younger generation have in translating their mothers' stories and intentions.

Other motifs include the figure of the Moon Lady (Chang-O), sight and seeing, and shadows.

HINT

Notice how Tan relies on motif, images and symbols to tie the different sections of *The Joy Luck Club* together. This is particularly important because this unifying function is not served by a single overarching narrator or plotline, as might be the case in other novels.

OBSERVATION OF PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

Throughout *The Joy Luck Club*, Tan examines society's expectations of women and the way in which women resist these expectations. As children, An-mei and Ying-ying are taught that women should be passive and quiet; they are not supposed to 'think of [their] own needs'. They may try to avoid passing this on to their daughters, but they do not succeed: An-mei tried to advise Rose not to live life as a dream, but reflects that her daughter has turned out the same as she did, despite her efforts. Some of the women accept this feminine ideal at first, but eventually every one of them rebels against it in her own way. An-mei learns to 'shout' and Lindo escapes her marriage by speaking, while Rose refuses to sign Ted's divorce papers and Lena finally argues against the inclusion of ice cream on the shared balance sheet.

The novel also considers race and racism, but much less directly. In 'Half and Half', Rose remembers how her mother-in-law tried to persuade her not to marry Ted because of his future medical career. She clearly thought that having a wife who did not look conventionally 'American' would potentially ruin his chances of success. She even goes on to assume that Rose's family is Vietnamese rather than Chinese. Lena also remembers an incident in which Ying-ying is mistaken for her maid, suggesting that it would not be uncommon for American society to assume that a Chinese woman was a servant rather than a relative. The narrative does not pass judgement on these incidents, leaving it to the reader to make up their own minds.

▶ **In what ways does *The Joy Luck Club* challenge racist ideas and stereotypes? Does it contain any stereotypes that it does not challenge?**

DID YOU KNOW?

'Rules of the Game' was the first section of the novel that Tan wrote, and it was published independently as a short story four years before *The Joy Luck Club* was first published.

OTHER MEDIA

- There is a well-known film version of *The Joy Luck Club* from 1993. Watch it and see how it compares to the book. Is there anything that the director or scriptwriter has changed from the book?

ACTIVITY 4 **A02** **SKILLS** PROBLEM SOLVING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

List all the examples of sight and seeing that you can think of. Looking at your list, how important do you think this motif is? What do you think it represents? Does it represent different things for different characters?

LANGUAGE

USE OF CHINESE WORDS

Transliterated Chinese words are used throughout the novel by both the older women and their daughters. These words will be unfamiliar to many readers, and this forces the reader to appreciate the linguistic divide between the generations. The use of these words also highlights the difference between cultures and the difficulty of translating key ideas and concepts that do not have a direct translation.

▶ **How does it make a reader who is used to reading in English feel when they encounter Chinese words which they do not immediately understand? Why might this feeling be important in terms of the book as a whole?**

GENERAL VOCABULARY

transliterated written using the most similar letters in another alphabet

KEY POINT

In *The Joy Luck Club* no single character has a perspective which takes priority over the others. Instead, the reader is allowed to see all of the different perspectives of the characters, which are presented as equal and balanced. It is therefore the reader themselves who gains the kind of complete understanding of everything in the book, which is denied to the characters.

DRAMATIC IRONY

Dramatic irony is a technique used by many writers in drama and prose. It means that the reader knows something that the character does not know.

Tan uses dramatic irony throughout *The Joy Luck Club*, placing her reader in a privileged position of knowledge. The reader knows the true stories of the older women before their daughters do. As the novel progresses, the reader starts to see the parallels and echoes between the older and younger generations' lives, which the characters are unaware of. In some cases, identifying these similarities puts the reader in the position of the mothers – holding on to their knowledge and experiences while watching their daughters making the same choices as they did, waiting for the right moment to tell their stories.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A01 **A04**

SKILLS PROBLEM SOLVING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your response.

1 'Strongest wind cannot be seen'. How is strength presented in *The Joy Luck Club*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

2 Discuss the importance of motherhood in the novel. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

3 'Then you must teach my daughter this same lesson. How to lose your innocence but not your hope.' Explore Tan's presentation of lessons and learning in *The Joy Luck Club*. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

4 Discuss Tan's use of structure in *The Joy Luck Club*. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

5 How is the gap between different cultures (in particular Chinese and American cultures) presented in *The Joy Luck Club*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

5 **By showing different generations and their experiences in both China and America, The Joy Luck Club is able to explore the differences between cultures and the difficulties this can cause to people[1]. Lena St. Clair, because she is half-Chinese and half-American, is shown to be stuck between different cultures and has a difficult life because of this[2]. She is tricked into believing she is in a fair and equal marriage, as is part of normal culture in America[3]. However, she is badly treated and unhappy in her marriage, unable to properly identify with her Chinese identity as a Tiger due to the blurring of her cultural background. Other characters are much less confused and are able to cope better with this gap between cultures[4].**

[1] A01: The first sentence establishes a close focus on the question.

[2] A01: This is an interesting point on character. Can you find a quotation to confirm this?

[3] A04: This comment shows contextual understanding of values in America. Can you think of ways of expanding this?

[4] A01: This comment shows awareness of the theme across the whole text, but needs further clarification. Which other characters would you discuss?

FURTHER READING

If you choose to read any of these works, you should compare and contrast them with the piece you have studied and how they add to your understanding of it. You should think about language, style, format, themes, plot, characters and context.

- *Amy Tan: A Critical Companion* (1998) edited by E.D. Huntley
- *Amy Tan* (1996) by Barbara Kramer
- *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001) by Amy Tan

THINGS FALL APART
CHINUA ACHEBE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Chinua Achebe was born in 1930 in the African country of Nigeria, which at the time of his birth was a colony under British rule. A member of the Igbo people of south-eastern Nigeria, Achebe was brought up with a mixture of traditional and European influences. His parents were converts to Christianity and while they respected Igbo traditions and raised him in its storytelling tradition (which would later heavily influence his writing), they also introduced him to Western literature. Achebe's exposure to Western literature was then further deepened through his elite English-language education. During colonial times, European novels about Africa tended to be escapist adventures depicting Africans as ignorant savages, and a growing resentment of this portrayal helped to fuel Achebe's decision to become a writer.

Achebe came to prominence thanks to the impact of his first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Written in English, it has been read and studied throughout the world and translated into 50 different languages. *Things Fall Apart* now stands as a leading work of post-colonial literature, which explores the colonial experience and its aftermath from the perspective of the colonised people. Set in the Igbo ('Ibo' in the novel) region during the years leading up to the establishment of British colonial rule in 1900, the story follows Okonkwo, a village leader and frightening warrior, whose life gradually unravels as change surrounds his homeland. It conveys the African view of colonialism that Achebe found so absent from European portrayals. Igbo proverbs and fables are incorporated into a narrative structure which is still familiar and easily approachable to readers of Western literature. Having now sold more than 8 million copies worldwide, prompted numerous critical studies and served as an inspiration for many African writers, *Things Fall Apart* is arguably the most important work of modern African literature.

▲ Chinua Achebe

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

post-colonial literature literature written about countries and cultures which are, or had been, governed under colonisation, usually by European countries and Britain in particular; post-colonial writers often come from heavily colonised regions such as Africa, India or Ireland

DID YOU KNOW?

Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* as a response to a famous novel of 1899 by the Polish writer, Joseph Conrad, called *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad's novel is also about European colonialism in Africa, but Achebe thought that the representation of native African life was racist and overly simplified. Achebe did not want Conrad's views about colonialism to become dominant, so he wrote *Things Fall Apart* to provide what he thought was a more accurate portrait.

ACTIVITY 1

A04

SKILLS PROBLEM SOLVING, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

▼ THE TEXT IN CONTEXT

One of Achebe's aims in *Things Fall Apart* was to show that African culture is complex and sophisticated. He wanted to combat the images of African life as savage and simple as portrayed in novels like *Heart of Darkness*. This was to show that 'if the colonisers and missionaries found chaos in Africa' it was because they brought it with them. Copy and complete the table and list all of the features of village life in *Things Fall Apart* which contribute to this image of a complex African culture, providing examples of each one. Once you have done this, note how many of those features are altered by the colonial forces in the second half of the novel.

▼ FEATURE OF NATIVE CULTURE	▼ IS IT DISRUPTED BY THE SETTLERS?
A functioning legal system, evidenced by the settlement with another village that brings Ikemefuna to Umuofia.	Yes, one of the reasons Okonkwo hangs himself is to avoid being tried in a colonial court according to British law.

KEY POINT

Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* as a response to what he saw as racist representations of Africa in much Western literature. Achebe wanted to write a novel from the perspective of the colonised natives rather than the colonising Europeans.

PLOT

The story centres on the fictional village of Umuofia, one of the nine villages of the Igbo people, where the middle-aged Okonkwo is one of the most respected of the village leaders. Beginning with a **recounting** of Okonkwo's victory in his youth over a **famed** wrestler, the first of the novel's three parts establishes Okonkwo's character and gives hints of his personality. His life has been propelled by a desire to distinguish himself from his now-deceased father, Unoka. **Flashbacks** portray Unoka as a lazy man constantly in debt to his neighbours, neglectful of his family and with what Okonkwo and other members of the village see as an 'effeminate' weakness for music and the arts.

Ashamed of his father, Okonkwo grows from humble and poor beginnings into a strong and hard-working man with one of the highest-ranking titles in the village, able to support three wives and eight children on a prosperous **compound**. When a boy named Ikemefuna arrives in his household, taken as a peace settlement in a dispute with the nearby village of Mbaino, it seems Okonkwo may **soften**. The boy comes to admire him as a father and, while Okonkwo cannot express it openly, he eventually feels real fondness for Ikemefuna. All appears to be well until the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves declares that Ikemefuna must be taken out of the village and killed. Ezeudu, one of the respected elders of the village, advises Okonkwo to take no part in the killing, since the boy has begun to call him Father. However, Okonkwo is so fearful of appearing weak and sentimental that he himself kills Ikemefuna with a machete. Afterward he expresses unhappiness at the **remorse** he feels, calling himself a 'shivering old woman.' Things soon get worse: Ezeudu dies and during a gun salute at his funeral, Okonkwo's gun explodes, killing Ezeudu's son. By village custom Okonkwo and his family are exiled for seven years. He takes refuge in his mother's village of Mbanta, where he is forced to begin again in middle age with a humble new farm and no title.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

recounting	telling someone a story or describing a series of events
famed	well-known
compound	an area that contains a group of buildings and is surrounded by a fence or wall
soften	becomes less strict and more sympathetic
remorse	a strong feeling of being sorry that you have done something very bad

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

flashback	when the narrator of a story jumps out of the present in order to describe an event which happened in the past; often flashbacks are in the form of the memories of characters in the present

In Part Two things get still harder for the traditionally-minded Okonkwo: Christian missionaries have begun to appear in Mbanta and, he hears, back home in Umuofia as well. His son Nwoye, still **scarred** by the killing of his adopted brother Ikemefuna, is influenced by the redemptive 'poetry of the new religion' and becomes a **convert** to Christianity. As the converts multiply, the English Christians begin to combine their church with the beginnings of a colonial administration and legal system. Okonkwo and the other Igbo people realise that they will need to choose between giving in to the colonial forces or fighting back to preserve their own culture.

In Part Three Okonkwo returns to Umuofia from his seven-year exile, but the happiness of his homecoming is put down by the way his neighbours have given in to the Europeans: most painfully, his son Nwoye. However, when another of the converts **provocatively sabotages** a traditional Igbo religious ceremony, the angered villagers strike back, burning the new Christian church to the ground. The colonial government takes Okonkwo and five other villagers as prisoners, makes them endure whippings and other humiliations until their release is paid for. Okonkwo believes an uprising is finally at hand, but when he kills a messenger of the government, no one else joins in and he understands that there will be no revolt. Government authorities go to Okonkwo's compound to arrest him and find that he has hanged himself. His countrymen find it strange that he committed suicide, because this is against Igbo teachings and does not fit with the identity Okonkwo constructed for himself in the novel. The novel ends with the colonial Commissioner thinking about how strange the African natives are and planning to write about it in a book.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

scarred left with a feeling of sadness or fear that continues for a long time after an unpleasant event

convert someone who has been persuaded to change their beliefs and accept a particular religion or opinion

provocatively in a way that is intended to make people angry or upset

sabotages deliberately spoils someone's plans to prevent them from succeeding

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

At times Achebe seems to present native African culture as being quite brutal and unpleasant. For example, Okonkwo is banished because of an accident and the child Ikemefuna is sentenced to a brutal execution. Why does Achebe present village life in this way? Does this presentation conflict at all with his aim of advancing African literature and combatting racist writing?

CHARACTERS

OKONKWO

- a middle-aged Igbo man widely respected for his prowess as a warrior and wrestler
- brave and physically strong
- **stern** and sometimes abusive to his three wives and eight children
- his life is dedicated to refusing to accept the laziness and 'feminine' weakness of his father, Unoka
- values the traditional masculine values of Umuofia
- sees the loss of masculine values due to missionary Christianity as a sign of 'womanly' weakness that threatens his people from within
- falls from respected community leader to suicidal **outcast** from society

UNOKA

- Okonkwo's **deceased** father
- hated by Okonkwo for his laziness, his interest in 'womanly' artistic activities, and the debts that he left behind when he died

GENERAL VOCABULARY

stern serious and strict, and showing strong disapproval of someone's behaviour

outcast someone who is not accepted by the people they live among, or who has been forced out of their home

deceased someone who has died, especially recently

EKWEFI

- the second of Okonkwo's three wives
- loved Okonkwo after seeing him wrestle long ago, but married another man because Okonkwo was too poor at the time to make a suitable husband
- ran away from her first husband and became Okonkwo's wife, having nine children with him, who all died very young
- a particularly dedicated and loving mother to her tenth child, Ezinma

NWOYE

- Okonkwo's eldest son by his first wife
- just entering manhood, but still influenced by his mother and the stories she tells him
- Okonkwo, rightly sensing that Nwoye is developing a notion of masculinity unlike his own, fears that his son will be weak and 'feminine' like Unoka was
- eventually breaks away from his father's worldview entirely, converting to Christianity and taking the Christian name Isaac

EZINMA

- Ekwefi's only child and Okonkwo's favourite daughter
- a strong-willed girl, she is unafraid of defying her father
- seen by Okonkwo as having much of his own character in her and he repeatedly wishes that she had been born a boy
- grows into a beautiful young woman with many suitors, but rejects them all in favour of helping her father during his exile and return
- although female, displays far more of the typically 'masculine' traits which Okonkwo values compared to his son Nwoye

GENERAL VOCABULARY

suitors men who want to marry a particular woman

oracle someone who is believed to communicate with the gods, who gave advice to people or told them what would happen

IKEMEFUNA

- a boy from the village of Mbaino who is brought to live in Okonkwo's compound
- comes to love Okonkwo as a father and becomes an adored older brother to Nwoye, broadening the younger boy's mind with his outsider perspectives
- his death caused by Okonkwo, a punishment that was declared by the oracle, helps to turn the devastated Nwoye away from his people's traditions and toward Christianity

EZEUDU

- one of Umuofia's most respected elders, a source of wise advice for Okonkwo
- urges Okonkwo not to take part in the killing of Ikemefuna, advice that Okonkwo unwisely ignores

MR BROWN

- the first missionary to arrive at Umuofia
- has a respectful and caring attitude towards the native culture
- wishes to combine Christianity with native culture, rather than replacing it
- very different from the settlers who follow him

REVEREND JAMES SMITH

- the opposite of Mr Brown
- rejects the native culture and preaches a strict and uncompromising form of Christianity

OBIERIKA

- Okonkwo's best friend
- a man of similar standing to Okonkwo but with a more sensible and cautious character
- while Okonkwo is in exile in Mbanta, Obierika supports him, bringing him news from the other villages and money from the sale of his yams

THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER

- the most powerful colonialist figure in the novel
- thinks he understands the native culture and that it is completely inferior to the culture of the West
- plans to write a book about how strange and savage Africa was before it was colonised

MR KIAGA

- an Igbo Christian convert and interpreter for the colonisers
- becomes the head of the Christian congregation in Mbanta
- his Christian charity, particularly his opening of the church to the outcasts of tribal society, gradually brings a number of villagers to the faith

GENERAL VOCABULARY

missionary	someone who has been sent to a foreign country to teach people about Christianity and persuade them to become Christians
preaches	talks about a religious subject in a public place, especially in a church during a service
uncompromising	unwilling to change opinions or intentions
yams	tropical climbing plants grown for their roots, which are eaten as a vegetable

DID YOU KNOW?

The title of *Things Fall Apart* is a quotation from a poem called 'The Second Coming' by the Irish poet William Butler Yeats. In this poem Yeats states that 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.' It is interesting to think about why Achebe chooses to use this quotation for his title. Perhaps he saw Yeats's Ireland as another country which had 'fallen apart' under British colonialism.

- **Although women are lower than men in Igbo society, they are far from powerless. Discuss the roles that Ekwefi, Ezinma, the oracle, Chielo and other female characters play in the novel.**

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

▼ CONSIDERING THE CHARACTERS

Masculine and feminine qualities are a major theme in the novel. Which ones are considered positive (by Okonkwo or by other characters) and which are negative? Copy and complete the table, providing evidence from the novel to support your claims. Are there any qualities which are both positive and negative at different times (for example, Okonkwo's physical strength, which is at times a good thing and at times a bad thing)?

	▼ MASCULINE	▼ FEMININE
▶ POSITIVE		Sympathy and comfort (Uchendu, chapter 14)
▶ NEGATIVE		

HINT

This is a novel in which things change greatly from the beginning to the end; it is a good idea to try and recognise this in your exam answers. It is accurate to say that Okonkwo is a respected and successful figure, but it is better to say that he starts off respected and successful but ends up as a failed outcast from society.

THEMES

TRADITION AND FAMILY

The importance of tradition to the Igbo people, the central role of family in those traditions and the threat to tradition and family presented by the European colonisers are the main themes of the novel. Okonkwo represents the traditional Igbo view of the world and the loss of his own son, Nwoye, to Christianity can be seen as representing the threat that the Western culture presents to the traditional Nigerian way of life. Okonkwo losing his position of privilege therefore represents the collapse of native African society once it comes into contact with European colonialism.

MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

Things Fall Apart contrasts the masculine and feminine. Feminist criticism of the novel has noted the many negative associations it attaches to feminine qualities, including weakness, laziness, fear and preoccupation with trivial things. However, care must be taken not to confuse the views of Okonkwo, those of other Igbo people and those of the Achebe himself. Okonkwo is the leader of his clan and believes in traditional gender roles, but the novel makes clear that his need to show his masculine strength comes from a desire to prove that he is not like his father. When the gender views of Igbo society are presented they are not necessarily anti-feminine. Okonkwo's crime in killing Ezeudu's son is called 'female' by local custom because it is accidental and thus more forgivable. Likewise, one of Mbanta's village elders advises him of the importance of motherly comfort in difficult times. Moreover, it is hard to argue that Igbo culture, as represented in the novel, celebrates Okonkwo's obsession with masculine strength and decisiveness, since this mindset leads to his suicide, an act forbidden by Igbo cultural customs. A more positive example of courage and determination is in fact shown by Okonkwo's wife, Ekwefi, who travels alone at night to the cave of the oracle, Chielo, to save her abducted daughter, Ezinma.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

Several characters in *Things Fall Apart* have qualities that would typically belong to the opposite gender. Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, has many typically feminine qualities, while his daughter, Ezinma, follows Okonkwo's idea of traditional masculine behaviour more closely. What is Achebe trying to show with this confusion of gender roles? How does this confusion relate to the theme of Christianity's introduction into village life?

DID YOU KNOW?

During the time that Achebe was writing there was a lot of debate among critics over whether African writers should write in English, which would allow them to be widely read, or write in their native languages, which would allow them to be true to the way of life they were trying to represent. Achebe spent much time considering this question before choosing to write his work entirely in English.

▶ A traditional Igbo village

KEY POINT

One of the central themes of *Things Fall Apart* is the collapse of traditional ways of life due to the influence of colonialism. This way of life is expressed through traditional ideas about family, gender identity, reputation and religion.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

disgraced	ashamed, especially in public
exile	a situation in which you are forced to leave your country and live in another country, especially for political reasons

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrator	a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

REPUTATION

The society presented in *Things Fall Apart* is a traditional one in which a person's reputation is extremely important. As the main character, Okonkwo is the main focus of this theme: his hard work on the farm, his skill as a wrestler and his achievements in battle are all efforts to build the personal reputation that his disgraced father lacked. Like other men he wears ankle bracelets to publicly display his titles. It is because reputation is so important to the Igbo that his exile after accidentally killing Ezeudu's son represents a serious punishment for him and not simply a seven-year relocation to a new town.

RELIGION

The religion of the Igbo people is central to their society and Achebe often portrays the conflict between African and European civilisations in religious terms. The people of Umuofia obey the conveyed commands of their oracle and to resolve disputes they call on ancestral spirits as judges (although the narrator implies that everyone knows that these are really village men wearing masks). The novel's portrayal of the English Christian church is complex as well. His feeling of anger towards the oracle's death sentence on his adopted brother drives Nwoye to Christianity, where he finds a forgiving and kind message seems to be communicated through the examples of Mr Kiaga and the English minister, Mr Brown. However, Brown's replacement, Reverend Smith, is a more stubborn and arrogant man and, by the end of the novel, Christianity seems to be little more than a representative of oppressive colonialism.

DESTINY VERSUS FREE WILL

The Igbo religion raises questions about how much control people have over their own lives. A society in which the decisions of oracles must be obeyed appears to be a society that lacks in free will. However, part of what makes Okonkwo a tragic character is that so many of his choices, like the decision to personally carry out Ikemefuna's death sentence, are freely made. His reluctance to accept responsibility for his own choices can be seen in the Igbo idea of *chi*, a personal god whose quality can be determined from the person's good or bad fortune. Early in the novel, when Okonkwo's life is a success, the reader learns an Igbo proverb that 'when a man says yes his *chi* says yes also,' implying that a positive outlook can shape a person's fate. Later, disgraced and in exile, Okonkwo rejects this proverb, concluding in his self-pity that 'a man could not rise beyond the destiny of his *chi*.'

▶ **How far do you think Okonkwo is responsible for his fate and how far do you think he is the victim of external forces that are beyond his control?**

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

fables	a traditional short story that teaches a moral lesson
metaphor	describing something by comparing it to an image which it resembles, in a way that suggests the object *is* the image

MAN AND NATURE

The Igbo are a traditional agricultural people, which places nature at the centre of their worldview. The cycle of seasons and the planting, harvest activities and festivals that follow them, provide the rhythm for the novel's recounting of the passage of time, with emphasis given to unusual periods of weather. Igbo folk wisdom is conveyed through fables concerning the weaknesses of humanised animals. It is notable that the first mention of Europeans in the novel is the account of a man who arrived on an 'iron horse.' This description of a bicycle combines the Igbo reliance on natural metaphors with the white man's transformation of nature into something strange and terrible.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

discredit	make people stop respecting or trusting someone or something

▶ **Notice the significance of the very ending of the novel, where the Commissioner thinks about the strangeness of the Africans and how this will make a good subject for a book to be read back home in Britain. Could this be Achebe showing exactly the kind of colonialist writer that *Things Fall Apart* was written to discredit?**

AUTHOR'S CRAFT

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

third-person	using the third person – that is, 'he', 'she' and 'it'; this differs from the first person ('I') and the second person, which directly addresses the reader ('you')
omniscient	knowing everything within the world of the novel or play, including the secrets of all the characters and what the future holds
narrator	a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film
folk story	a traditional and typical story of the ordinary people who live in a particular area
irony	using words to convey a meaning that is completely opposite to their apparent meaning

NARRATIVE VOICE

The novel uses a third-person omniscient narrator. While Okonkwo provides the main point-of-view, the narrator shows the thoughts of many other characters and also makes comments about them and their culture. In the opening section, the omniscient narrator gives *Things Fall Apart* the feeling close to that of an old-fashioned tale or folk story. Later in the novel, as colonialism changes the way the Igbo people can live their lives, the style changes, reflecting the idea that colonialism has disrupted the traditional way of life. As the novel progresses, there is also an greater focus on Okonkwo's state of mind, meaning that the voice of the omniscient narrator is reduced.

The use of an omniscient narrator is also key to the use of irony in *Things Fall Apart*, particularly in relation to the Igbo people and their customs. For example, when the people of Mbanta offer the Christians a plot of cursed land for their church, they are shocked when the Christians do not fall dead and take this as a sign of the great power of the Christian faith, when in fact (although the narrator does not say so) it is an argument for rational thinking.

▶ **It is often difficult to know where the line between Okonkwo and the narrator is drawn and their voices often seem to blur together. This can make it hard to say which ideas and statements are the narrator's and which belong only to Okonkwo. Can you identify any points where Okonkwo holds a belief or performs an action which the narrator disapproves of?**

KEY POINT

Things Fall Apart uses several devices which have a significant impact on the way the story is told. These include an omniscient narrator whose voice often merges with that of the characters and flashbacks which mean the story jumps around in time.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrative the story or plot

USE OF FLASHBACK

The novel makes frequent use of flashbacks, in which the narrative switches back to an earlier time to provide background information dramatically. Okonkwo's troubled relationship with his father, his single years as a poor farmer, Ekwefi's escape from her first marriage to Okonkwo's house and her very difficult years as a young mother are all told through flashbacks, which help provide Okonkwo's family with a sense of history. Flashbacks also reveal many of the original causes of current problems in Okonkwo's life and in his family's lives.

ACTIVITY 3 **A02** **SKILLS** PROBLEM SOLVING, INTERPRETATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Copy and complete the table and list every major event that happens in Okonkwo's life (or at least events which directly affect him). Class each event as happening either in the present or in the past of the novel. Try to identify how the events in Okonkwo's present and his past are linked to each other.

▼ EVENT	▼ PAST OR PRESENT?	▼ LINK TO PAST OR PRESENT?
Witnesses his father's poverty and state of debt	Past	Gives the present Okonkwo his focus on prosperity and property.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

simile similar to a metaphor, but says that an object is like an image rather than that it is the image it is the image

foreshadows shows or says that something will happen in the future

symbol in literature, people, objects or events that have a meaning other than their literal meaning

proverb a short saying that contains a moral message or seeks to guide behaviour

METAPHOR AND SIMILE

Like most novels, *Things Fall Apart* uses metaphorical language, describing things or people by referring to other things thought to be similar. Okonkwo is called 'Roaring Flame' by his countrymen, a metaphor that may associate his character in the reader's mind with all-consuming and ignorant anger. Another kind of descriptive technique called a simile is used on the first page of the novel, which tells the reader how the young Okonkwo's fame 'had grown like a bush fire in the *harmattan*,' the *harmattan* being a West African trade wind. Okonkwo's life, at first appearing brilliant and powerful, in the end is like a fire that burns itself out and leaves only ruin behind.

HINTS

Writing about similes and metaphors is a good way to bring the analysis of language into your answer and therefore gain higher marks. Do not just say what characters are like, but explain how Achebe vividly communicates this quality through his use of images.

Notice the importance of nature in the way Achebe describes the village life and traditions. This helps to show the actions of the settlers, when they come in and disrupt that life, as being deeply unnatural.

FORESHADOWING

When an element in a story provides a hint of what is to come later, you can say it foreshadows those later events. The clearest example in *Things Fall Apart* is the swarm of locusts that arrives in Part One, a symbol of destruction which is also met with curiosity and excitement by the Igbo people, since it is an event that few of them have ever experienced. This event foreshadows the later arrival of the Christian missionaries, whose novelty fascinates some of the natives but who will bring about destruction of the traditional Igbo way of life.

PROVERBS, FABLES AND ALLEGORY

Igbo culture is highly verbal, using proverbs and fables to pass wisdom from one generation to the next; the novel employs many of them to illustrate the cultural knowledge soon to be threatened by Western influence. The longest of these is a Nigerian fable about a tortoise who asks birds to help him fly to a feast in the sky, where he uses a naming trick to deceive the hosts into feeding him all the food. Angered, the birds leave him there to jump back to earth and promise to tell his wife to put out her soft belongings to break his fall, where as they tell her to put out hard things instead. This explains the broken appearance of the tortoise's shell. In the context of the novel, the fable can also be interpreted as foreshadowing the meeting of native people and the colonialist Westeners and as an allegory expressing the need for the natives (the birds) to use both language and violence to overthrow the colonialist (the tortoise).

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

allegory a story, painting or similar in which the events and characters represent ideas or teach a moral lesson

GENERAL VOCABULARY

overthrow remove a leader or government from power, especially by force

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

Can you find any other allegorical tales in *Things Fall Apart*, besides the one about the tortoise? Is there any way that the story of Okonkwo himself might be seen as an allegory for the fate of something else? What could this something else be?

ACTIVITY 4

A02

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Think about the actions of the major characters in the novel in the context of its ideas about destiny and free will. Which actions are made without any choice and which are the product of characters' decisions? An example has been provided in the following table.

▼ NOT FREELY DECIDED	▼ FREELY DECIDED
The people of Umuofia must kill Ikemefuna.	Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna himself.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A01 **A02**

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

1 'Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered.' Explore the presentation of respect and reputation in *Things Fall Apart*. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

2 How are masculine and feminine qualities important in *Things Fall Apart*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

3 'If you don't like my story, write your own.' How is storytelling important in *Things Fall Apart*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

4 Explore Achebe's presentation of colonialism in *Things Fall Apart*. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

5 How does Achebe explore ideas of family in *Things Fall Apart*? You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. **(40 marks)**

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your response.

5 Achebe uses the idea of family in the example of the wider Igbo tribe in which Okonko lives and in the character's relationship with his father, wife and children[1]. Both examples are important to the story.

Family is one of the main things that defines Okonkwo as a character,[2] influencing his thoughts and actions. His fear of becoming like his father is what drives him to treat his own family in the manner that he does, while influencing his desire to prove himself to be a strong and respectable figure within his village. Nwoye, Okonko's son, causes 'his father great anxiety for his incipient laziness'[3] as he fears that he will not grow up to be like him and instead will show the qualities of Unoka.[4]

[1] AO1: Addresses the question clearly with two relevant ideas.

[2] AO1: This demonstrates knowledge of the text by linking the theme with a key character.

[3] AO2: The idea is backed up using an appropriate quotation. Remember, it is a good idea to choose a quotation where there is interesting language to discuss. What could be said about the choice of the intensifier 'great' and the adjective 'incipient'?

[4] AO1: Perhaps this could be further developed, using terms such as 'juxtaposition' to discuss the contrast between characters.

FURTHER READING

If you choose to read any of these works, you should compare and contrast them with the piece you have studied and how they add to your understanding of it. You should think about language, style, format, themes, plot, characters and context.

- *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Joseph Conrad
- *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

GENERAL VOCABULARY

homogenise to make (or assume that) different things or people are all the same

▶ This novel is concerned with how Western cultures often homogenise. Do you think this image reflects the novel?

PAPER 2: MODERN DRAMA AND LITERARY HERITAGE TEXTS

Assessment Objective 1

Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement

Assessment Objective 2

Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects

Assessment Objective 4 (only applies to Section B)

Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

A01 is worth 17% of marks

A02 is worth 17% of marks

A04 is worth 7% of marks for the whole course

This chapter focuses on Paper 2: Modern Drama and Literary Heritage Texts of the English Literature course. Working through these lessons and activities will help you develop the reading and writing skills you will need for the Paper 2 exam.

The chapter is split into the following sections:

- Modern drama
- Literary heritage.

Paper 2 is worth 40% of the total marks for the course and is split into two sections:

- Section A: Modern drama
- Section B: Literary heritage texts.

In section A of your exam you will need to be able to meet Assessment Objectives A01 and A02.

In section B of your exam you will need to be able to meet Assessment Objectives A01, A02 and A04.

Assessment Objective 1

Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of prose, poetry and drama texts

Assessment Objective 2

Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects

MODERN DRAMA

WHAT IS MODERN DRAMA?

Broadly speaking, modern drama is drama that is written during the 20th and 21st centuries. It should therefore be distinguished from older, classical forms of drama. This includes the drama produced in ancient Greece by playwrights such as Euripides and Sophocles, which is widely viewed as laying the foundations of dramatic writing in Europe over future centuries. Classical drama also includes the plays of William Shakespeare, which were written and performed during the 16th and 17th centuries and which are often seen as being the foundation and starting point of English dramatic writing. Not only are the language and stage conventions very different in modern drama compared to Shakespearean or Greek drama, but the society in which the plays exist is also very different. For example, modern drama is much more international in its scope, containing writers from Africa and the USA alongside English authors. Drama itself also occupies a very different social position today than it did in Shakespeare's time. Shakespeare's plays were popular entertainment for the people of London, performed to large crowds in a theatre that was next to a bear fighting pit. In modern times this kind of entertainment tends to be provided by film and television, with modern drama taking on a far more academic and intellectual place in society. Modern drama is frequently studied by students and scholars and is watched by people who want to think and be challenged as well as be entertained.

However, there are also elements of modern drama that follow the traditions laid down by Shakespearean drama. Shakespeare's plays are often closely tied up with the major political issues of his day. Likewise, several plays on the modern drama syllabus are related to their political context in similar ways. Modern drama therefore continues to deal with political ideas that are directly related to its historical context in the same way that drama did in Shakespeare's time.

▲ King James I

HOW TO READ THE TEXTS

The things that you would look at when analysing any piece of literature also apply to dramatic texts. These include elements like language, form and structure. However, in addition to these elements, dramatic texts also contain an extra dimension that does not apply to other kinds of text and that you should particularly pay attention to when studying drama. This extra dimension is called 'stagecraft'. 'Stagecraft' essentially means the aspects of a play that appear in its performance, rather than its written form. It includes things like stage directions (when and how characters leave and enter the stage, how they move and interact) and setting (the indications which the playwright gives about any scenery, background or particular clothing that should be worn on stage). Both of these things make a vital contribution to the meaning and effect of the plays, but their importance does not always come through by simply reading the words on the page. When reading a play you should therefore always try to picture the scene in your mind, in order to get a clearer sense of what the stagecraft is doing. It is also a good idea to try and see a few different performances of the play that you are studying. This helps to see how different directors interpret and make use of the indications about stagecraft provided by the author. You could also try performing particular scenes out loud with your classmates.

THINKING ABOUT CONTEXT

Because several of these plays are directly linked to a specific historical situation, such as the Holocaust, British colonialism, or 1950s New York, some knowledge of their contexts can often be very useful in helping you understand their meanings. This kind of research is also helpful because a number of these works are closely linked to situations that you might not be familiar with, such as 1950s New York, for example, or the pre-war British aristocracy. Similarly, you might find it helpful to try and reconstruct the thoughts and feelings of a Jewish child fleeing the Holocaust or an autistic teenager in the present day, depending on which play you are reading. If you can imagine the characters' situations in this way, it will allow you to understand the emotional force that these works possess.

TEXT OPTIONS

A View from the Bridge	Arthur Miller
An Inspector Calls	J.B. Priestley
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time	Simon Stephens
Kindertransport	Diane Samuels
Death and the King's Horseman	Wole Soyinka

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE
ARTHUR MILLER

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Arthur Miller was born in New York in 1915 and died in 2005. Many people think of him as the greatest playwright of the 20th century, certainly from the USA at least, and possibly in the world. His family had moved to the USA from Poland and settled in the district of Brooklyn, the setting for *A View from the Bridge*, which refers to the famous Brooklyn Bridge. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1938 and started to work as a journalist, but also wrote plays. Some of these plays were extremely successful, such as *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*. (You may wish to read or watch a production of some of his other plays.)

▲ The Brooklyn Bridge in New York

A View from the Bridge was inspired by Miller's time working in the Brooklyn shipyards and getting to know the Italian community. It was a very tough time, as jobs were extremely hard to find. Miller listened to the stories of the Italian immigrants about their journeys to the USA to escape the poverty that afflicted much of Italy in the post-war period. He based the story in *A View from the Bridge* on these stories.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

poverty	the situation or experience of being poor

PLOT

The play is set in Brooklyn, New York. Two of Beatrice's Italian cousins, Marco and Rodolpho, arrive as illegal immigrants and stay in the Carbone household with Beatrice, her husband, Eddie, and their 17-year-old niece, Catherine. Eddie becomes disturbed by the developing relationship between Rodolpho, the younger cousin, and Catherine, as he has begun to feel a strong attraction to his niece. Eddie always finds fault with Rodolpho and his actions and behaviour. Unable to control his hidden desire, Eddie decides to inform the Immigration Bureau about Marco and Rodolpho's illegal status and the two brothers are arrested.

There is suspicion that Eddie was the one who informed on them and Beatrice and Catherine become sure that Eddie's jealousy made him do it. Eddie is also accused by Marco, who spits in Eddie's face during his arrest. Eddie does not succeed in getting rid of both cousins; Rodolpho will still be able to marry Catherine and will then be able to apply to become an American citizen. This does not apply to Marco, who finds out that he will have to go back to Italy. He is let out on bail and then kills Eddie, turning Eddie's own knife on him.

▶ **Why do you think Miller chose the title *A View from the Bridge*?**

GENERAL VOCABULARY

immigrants	people who comes to live in a foreign country
on bail	temporarily released when waiting for a trial

ACTIVITY 1 **A01** **SKILLS** PROBLEM SOLVING, CREATIVITY ADAPTABILITY, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Write down what you think the audience expects to happen to Catherine and Rodolpho and to Beatrice after the play. If possible, compare your ideas with a partner or in a group. You may wish to consider whether they are destined to be happy and how the ending of the play leaves you feeling about them and their future.

CHARACTERS

EDDIE CARBONE

- Beatrice's husband
- a Italian American, aged 40: 'a husky, slightly overweight longshoreman'
- a traditional Italian master of the house
- happy to offer the cousins a home and to be generous towards them
- not someone who trusts people easily; suspicious of people's motives: 'the less you trust, the less you be sorry'
- someone who believes in the importance of his good name and of honour
- protective towards women, especially his niece Catherine
- obsessive in his love for Catherine
- in a marriage with a lack of warmth and intimacy
- jealous of Rodolpho, implying that he may have homosexual tendencies
- so desperate to get Rodolpho out of the way that he is prepared to inform the Immigration Bureau
- killed in a fight with Marco
- the 'tragic hero' of this 'Greek tragedy', ruined by his fatal weakness: an obsessive and improper love for his niece

GENERAL VOCABULARY

husky	big and strong
longshoreman	a person that works at the docks loading and unloading cargo from ships
motives	reasons for doing something or acting a certain way.
intimacy	a state of having a close personal relationship with someone
improper	not meeting moral or social standards

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

Greek tragedy	a highly influential theatrical form from Ancient Greece; plays in this form were often based on myth

GENERAL VOCABULARY

confront to accuse someone of doing something
confined to kept within the limits of a particular activity or place
torn unable to decide what to do because you have different feelings or different things that you want
tuberculosis an infectious disease that mainly affects the lungs

BEATRICE CARBONE

- the loyal and dependable wife of Eddie
- devoted to her niece Catherine, the daughter she never had
- a caring person, anxious to do the right thing by the cousins
- obedient to Eddie's desire to run everything in the home
- worried about her marriage and lack of intimacy
- aware of Eddie's feelings for Catherine and prepared to confront him about them
- an advisor to Catherine about Eddie and growing up
- someone who, to the very end, stands by Eddie, who recognises this by saying 'My B!' as he dies

CATHERINE

- the 17-year-old daughter of Beatrice's dead sister, Nancy
- a lively, attractive and happy person
- naïve and innocent
- a young woman who has little experience of the outside world, having been very much confined to the Carbone household
- someone who has always seen Eddie as a father figure whom she loves
- unable at first to understand that things need to change now she is an adult
- excited by the arrival of the cousins, so it is not surprising that she quickly falls for one of them
- torn because she still respects Eddie and feels at first she cannot marry Rodolpho if he disapproves, although eventually she does choose Rodolpho over Eddie

MARCO

- the older of the cousins and brother of Rodolpho
- poor, desperate and grateful to the Carbones
- an illegal immigrant to the USA; he has left behind at home in Sicily his wife and three children whom he loves (one is a baby who is ill with tuberculosis)
- desperate to earn some money in the USA to look after the family as things are so bad in Sicily
- always polite, understanding his position in the Carbone household
- calm and peaceful in Act One
- angry and frustrated in Act Two
- well-known as a strong man and described as 'a bull'
- straightforward and direct, speaking clearly and simply
- responsible and protective towards Rodolpho, with a strong sense of family honour

GENERAL VOCABULARY

takes to starts to like

RODOLPHO

- the younger of the cousins and brother of Marco
- unmarried and unattached; someone whose good looks and blond hair make an immediate impression on women, especially Catherine
- calm and polite throughout the play
- popular and intelligent, with a good sense of humour
- someone who takes to the American way of life and wants to enjoy all that New York has to offer
- very different from the Italian male stereotype, as he has interests such as cooking and sewing and is not afraid to express his 'feminine side'
- keen to calm things down between Eddie and Marco, but cannot stop the fight that leads to Eddie's death

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

Greek Chorus in classical Greek theatre, a group of actors who comment (through speaking, song and/or dance) on the action of the play as a collective voice, rather than as individual characters

ALFIERI

- an Italian-born lawyer; a character in the play, but also the play's narrator
- part of the immigrant community in Brooklyn
- important in the play as commentator on the events, similar to the role the Chorus played in a Greek tragedy
- the one who introduces the characters, discusses the events, talks to the audience and reasons with the other characters
- powerless in the end to stop the tragedy, although he is a kind and sensitive man who would do anything to be able to do so
- a reliable friend, who is honest and firm when he warns Eddie
- a voice for Arthur Miller and his views

▲ Brooklyn Dockyards during the Great Depression

THEMES

LOVE

The many different aspects of love are explored in the play: family love, parent/child love, brotherly love, romantic love, love between friends and love for your country. Miller shows that love can have both positive and negative effects. Love becomes twisted in the mind of Eddie in particular and is therefore the source of the battles that then occur.

JEALOUSY

Jealousy, particularly that of men over a woman they love, is a common subject for playwrights to explore: Shakespeare used it in the play *Othello*, for example. Here, it is what makes Eddie turn against Rodolpho and it is strong enough to make him even abandon the principle of family honour that is so important in his community.

JUSTICE AND THE LAW

The importance of this theme is set out at the start of the play by Alfieri who, significantly, is himself a lawyer. This is something that immediately establishes a link to Greek tragedy, which was often about different ideas of justice: 'In Sicily, from where their fathers came, the law has not been a friendly idea since the Greeks were beaten.' This opening speech shows how there can be a conflict between the law and a deeper, unwritten law that is sometimes called 'natural justice' or the 'Divine law'. Alfieri refers to this near the end of the play when he says 'Only God makes justice.' Eddie also has strong views on justice and what he feels is right. The differences between American and Sicilian law are highlighted. So the play asks the question: what is *really* just (fair)? It is a question about who judges and what is right and wrong. The play does not answer such questions, but it asks them in a powerful way.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

betrayal	breaking the trust or confidence of a person or community (such as a country), often through helping their enemy
machismo	excessive or exaggerated masculinity

HONOUR

Codes of honour are very important in many societies, but they are particularly connected with Italian and Sicilian society. Sicily has long been a noted centre for the Mafia, whose activities are often illegal, but also influenced by a strong sense of family honour. This is shown particularly in the *Godfather* films and the television series *The Sopranos*. Family honour is often seen as more important than the law, as demonstrated in *A View from the Bridge* by the story of Vinny Bolzano at the start of the play. Betraying the family in any way is something that should be punished. This story sets the scene for Eddie's betrayal of Rodolpho and Marco.

ANGER AND VIOLENCE

This theme is linked to the themes of justice and honour, but it also reveals itself through the frustration that Eddie feels and the tensions that grow through the play, resulting from the effect of the cousins' arrival.

SEXUALITY AND GENDER

The play touches on several aspects of people's sexuality, including the question 'What makes a man a man?'. It was written at a time when old stereotypes and attitudes were beginning to be questioned. In Eddie, Marco and Rodolpho there are three different 'types' of man. Two of them are influenced strongly by Mediterranean machismo and one, Rodolpho, represents what you might call the 'new man' who challenges traditional assumptions and therefore poses a threat to the traditionalists. In addition, the play looks at what happens when a man whose marriage has become rather distant is overcome with desire for a much younger woman, who is also his niece.

While the focus is mainly on male sexuality, the audience is also very aware of how Beatrice wishes again to have a full marriage, which is made much more difficult by her husband's desire for Catherine. The play also looks at the awakening of sexual feelings in Catherine and the confusion about her feelings for Eddie and Rodolpho.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

overcome unable to behave normally because an emotion is felt so strongly

pawns the smallest and least valuable chess pieces; people that are used or manipulated by others for their own gain

FATE

Another important theme that Arthur Miller takes from Greek tragedy is that of fate, where things are just 'meant to happen'. Human beings are seen as almost like pawns in a cosmic chess game where the result is known in advance and cannot be changed, whatever moves are made. It is Alfieri who reveals the final destiny, just as he is the one who gave warning of it at the start of the play when he introduces the storyline of the play.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

quotations words from a text

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Which characters tell the audience about the different types of love in the play?
Look at the subject of love from the point of view of all of the characters, taking account of the different types of relationship. Copy and complete the table to show which types of relationship apply to which characters. Add a comment on how each type of relationship is portrayed both positively and negatively in the play. If possible, add brief quotations to support your points.

▼ TYPE OF LOVE	▼ CHARACTER	▼ HOW THE RELATIONSHIPS ARE PORTRAYED	
		▼ POSITIVE FEATURES	▼ NEGATIVE FEATURES
Family love			
Parent/child love			
Brotherly love			
Young love/ romance			
Love between friends			
Love of country			

STAGECRAFT AND SETTING

GENERAL VOCABULARY

claustrophobic small or confined
parallel happening at the same time

SETTING

The play takes place mainly in the Carbones' apartment and this gives it a slightly claustrophobic feel. This is again characteristic of Greek tragedy, which was always set in a single location with references to events happening in other places communicated through the words of the characters (as is done in this play). The streets outside the apartment and the strong presence of Brooklyn Bridge also give the feeling of a close community.

STRUCTURE AND FORM

The play has just two Acts, which are very closely connected, with certain parallel events, such as the Immigration Bureau situation. The role of Alfieri is central to the way in which these events are linked together and he himself suggests that the play runs a course that he knows (and to some extent the audience knows) will lead to a 'bloody' end. This prior knowledge relates to the theme of fate and also contributes to the use of dramatic irony.

LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

dramatic irony a device, used in novels, plays, poetry and films, where the audience knows something about a situation that the character (or characters) involved does not
colloquial slang or informal language
dialogue conversation between two or more people
contrast a literary device where two objects, people or ideas are placed next to each other to highlight their differences
euphemism a more delicate or indirect way of saying something that might otherwise appear blunt or uncomfortable
symbolism using symbols to represent particular concepts or ideas
symbol in literature, people, objects or events that have a meaning other than their literal meaning

▲ High-heeled shoes

COLLOQUIAL SPEECH

The Carbones, including to some extent the cousins, speak in a colloquial way, one that Miller has clearly based on the actual speech patterns of the Italian Brooklyn community. This speech uses abbreviations and forms that are not standard American English. The strong New York dialect and accent help make the dialogue seem very realistic, as shown by the following: 'That's a hit-and-run guy baby… Them guys don't think of nobody but theirself.'

PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE

In contrast to the speech of the Carbone family, Alfieri speaks in a more 'correct' way, using formal language, including examples of the ways in which a professional lawyer might speak: 'Every few years there is still a case… in some Caesar's year… Another lawyer… sat there as powerless as I.'.

EUPHEMISM

One example of the use of euphemism is when Beatrice asks 'When am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?', rather than saying 'When are we going to have sex again?', which in 1955 would have been a far too direct question to have said on stage.

BROOKLYN BRIDGE

Brooklyn Bridge is the link between the poor areas of Brooklyn, Red Hook and the material success of Manhattan. Crossing the bridge symbolises people's aspirations for prosperity.

HIGH-HEELED SHOES

Catherine's love of high-heeled shoes shows her femininity and growing womanhood. She likes wearing them and attracting admirers. Eddie hates the 'clack clack' they make, as he becomes aware that Catherine will appear desirable and that this could lead to her marrying and leaving home.

THE CHAIR

The chair used in the contest of strength between Marco and Eddie at the end of Act One becomes a symbol of masculinity and power.

ACTIVITY 3 A01 A02

SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, EMPATHY, ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1 Find examples in the play where characters use the words *just, justice, law, right, wrong, illegal, crime, criminal* and any other connected words you can find. Look particularly closely at everything said by Alfieri.

2 Looking at the examples you have found, see what different ideas about justice and the law you can find in the play. Work out your ideas on what you, as a viewer or reader of this play, are meant to think about these subjects.

3 Imagine you are a lawyer defending Marco. What would you say in his defence? Conduct a trial of Marco. If possible, work in a group of three: one could be the defence lawyer, one the prosecutor and the third could be the judge. Copy and complete your row in the table, writing the key points to defend, prosecute or pass judgement on Marco. Consider how such a 'weighing of the evidence' could help your understanding of the play.

▼ ROLE	▼ POINTS TO BE MADE	▼ EVIDENCE
Defence lawyer		
Prosecutor		
Judge		

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

1 'The characters in *A View from the Bridge* are helpless pawns that cannot control their actions.' Explore the theme of fate in the play. You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

2 How and why does Miller make the audience feel sympathy for Eddie? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

3 Discuss the concept of a 'higher' law and justice in the play. You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

4 How does Miller explore the theme of violence and conflict? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 What is Catherine's role in the play? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 Catherine is one of the most important characters in Miller's play. As a character, she is central to the story and is used to show a number of themes and ideas.[1]

As a naïve and lively young person, she is juxtaposed with[2] the older and more cynical characters in the play which makes both hers and their actions more significant. It is this way of acting, however, that sparks the main conflict in the play.[3] Eddie finds his niece attractive and begins to become jealous of the way other men start to look at her as she gets older, saying 'Katie you are walkin' wavy! I don't like the looks they're givin you'.[4] As Catherine is so innocent and carefree, she is unaware of this and continues to make the situation worse by falling for one of the cousins.

[1] A01: Could this answer be more specific to show an informed personal response? What do you think are the main ideas Catherine represents?

[2] A02: Juxtaposition is a contrast in key images or ideas. This comment shows an awareness of the author's methods.

[3] A02: This comment shows an awareness of the whole text structure. How could this be expanded?

[4] A02: How could you comment on the language in this quotation?

[5] A01: To maintain a good critical style, this point needs evidence from the text and further exploration. What are your ideas?

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use the exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your response.

OTHER MEDIA

- *Vu du Pont*: a 1962 French-Italian film based on the play, written by Norman Rosten and directed by Sidney Lumet.
- *Uno sguardo dal ponte*: an Italian operatic adaptation, first performed in 1961, written by Renzo Rossellini.
- Opera: a second operatic adaptation, featuring a libretto written by Arthur Miller himself and music by William Bolcom, first performed in 1999.
- Television: in 1986, Geoff Wilson produced a version for television for the BBC.
- An introduction to Greek tragedy, by the National Theatre (search terms).

FURTHER READING

If you choose to read any of these works, you should compare and contrast them with the piece you have studied and how they add to your understanding of it. You should think about language, style, format, themes, plot, characters and context.

- *Death of a Salesman* (1949) by Arthur Miller
- *The Crucible* (1953) by Arthur Miller

▲ Apartment blocks in New York city

GENERAL VOCABULARY

socialist a set of political beliefs about how society should be run, based on equality between the classes; Russia was a socialist country at the time the play was written, and Priestley had close connections with the country

Welfare State a social system put in place in the UK by the Labour government after the end of the Second World War; the Welfare State uses taxes to pay for services for the population in areas such as healthcare, unemployment support, education and housing

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

dramatic irony a device, used in novels, plays, poetry and films, where the audience knows something about a situation that the character (or characters) involved does not

AN INSPECTOR CALLS
J.B. PRIESTLEY

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

John Boynton (J.B.) Priestley was born in Yorkshire in 1894 and died in 1984. He left school aged 16 and worked in an office as a clerk. He signed up to fight in the First World War, where he narrowly escaped being killed. After the war, he studied at Cambridge University, before working in London as a writer. His first play was followed by another 50 plays. Priestley also wrote several novels, including *The Good Companions*, which was the work that first gave him national fame. During the Second World War he wrote a series of very popular broadcasts for the BBC. He was very active in left-wing and socialist politics and supported the development of the Welfare State after the end of the Second World War; he was opposed to war and was a founding member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

The play *An Inspector Calls* was highly influenced by the subject of war, as it was written at the end of the Second World War and is set just two years before the outbreak of the First World War. The characters in the play are aware of the possibility that a war is coming and discuss this explicitly. In particular, Mr Birling wrongly argues that a war will not start, just as he wrongly claims that the *Titanic* will not sink, when in reality it did sink in the same year that the play is set. This effect, where the audience knows something significant that the characters are not aware of, is called dramatic irony. Inspector Goole also seems to refer to the war during his final speech to the Birling family, when he talks about a future of 'fire and blood and anguish', but, unlike Mr Birling, he seems not to be subject to dramatic irony and to know for a fact that war is coming.

The period in which the play is set, from the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 until the start of the First World War, was known as the Edwardian Era (after King Edward VII). It was a time of increasing industrialisation, with more and more people moving from the country to the cities to take jobs in factories such as Mr Birling's. It was also a time when traditional class structures were still dominant and upper class families like the Birlings enjoyed a level of unquestioned wealth and privilege. The two world wars that followed changed society completely, so those who saw *An Inspector Calls* when it first came out in 1946 would

DID YOU KNOW?

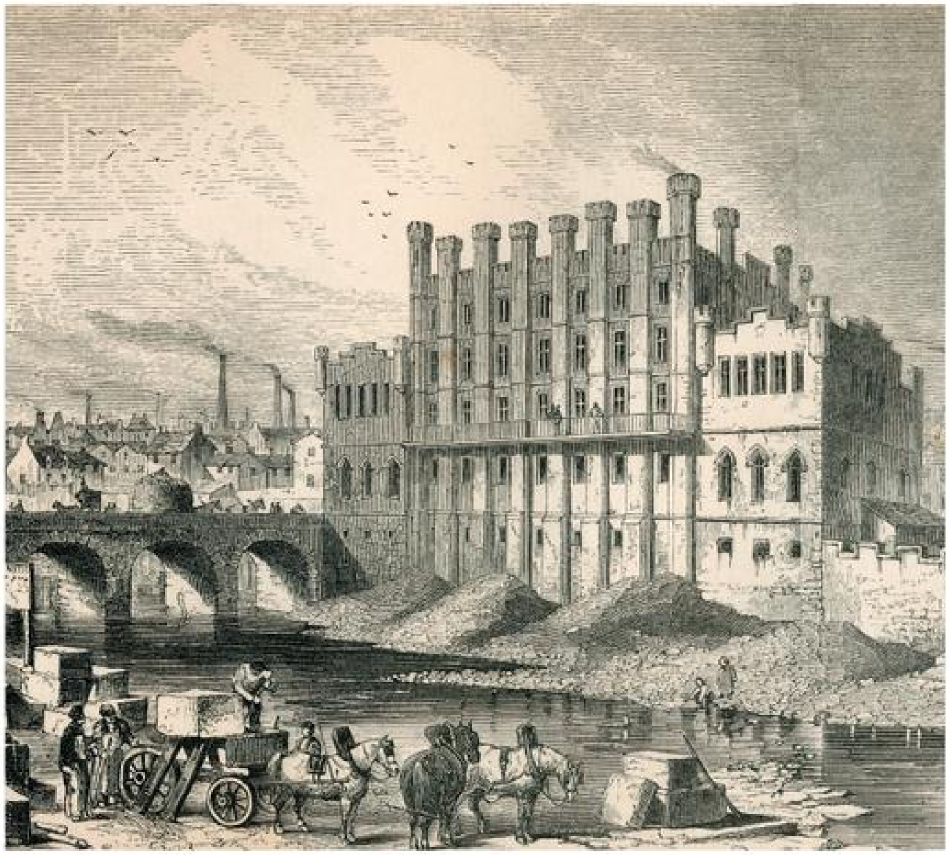
For a long time, *An Inspector Calls* was out of fashion and not often read or performed.
It was thought that its political message was very crudely communicated and that it was simply an example of a very old-fashioned kind of drama called a 'drawing-room play'. A 1992 production directed by Stephen Daldry initiated the play's return to fame.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

drawing-room play a genre of play that developed during the Victorian era, in which all of the action of the play takes place in the drawing room or another communal room of a family home

have recognised it as being set in a very different era. This was especially true for the wealthy, who in 1912 lived in far greater luxury, being able to employ many servants and having absolute power over their workers' wages and conditions.

It is also important to notice that *An Inspector Calls* is one of Priestley's 'time plays'. Priestley was very interested in the philosophy of time and wrote several plays which experimented with unusual forms of time. In *An Inspector Calls* this experimentation can be seen in the fact that Eva Smith's death is apparently discussed by the Inspector and the Birling family before it has happened. The play ends with Mr Birling being told that a young woman has just been brought into the infirmary having committed suicide by drinking disinfectant.



▲ An industrialised town in the north of England

ACTIVITY 1 **A04** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTABILITY

▼ THE TEXT IN CONTEXT

It is very important to *An Inspector Calls* that the audience in 1946 has knowledge about recent history that the characters in the play do not have. This means that the audience sees several elements of the characters' lives as being old-fashioned and knows that many of its thoughts and assumptions are wrong. Make a list of everything in the play that would appear differently to the audience than it appears to the characters.

▼ FEATURE OF THE PLAY	▼ HOW ITS PERCEPTION IS CHANGED FOR THE AUDIENCE
Mr Birling is certain the *Titanic* will not sink.	The audience knows that the *Titanic* did sink in 1912.
Businessmen and factory owners have almost absolute power over their workforce in relation to wages and working conditions.	By 1946, the Welfare State and stronger trade unions meant that workers had much more bargaining power to gain better conditions from bosses.

KEY POINT

An Inspector Calls is a play which explicitly communicates Priestley's socialist politics. He uses his interest in time to do this by manipulating the differences between the time when the play was written and the time when it is set.

PLOT

In Act 1, the characters and setting are introduced in the dining room of the Birling family during an engagement party for Sheila, the daughter of Mr and Mrs Birling, and Gerald Croft. This is followed by the arrival of Inspector Goole, which then changes the whole course of events. He announces the very recent suicide of a girl called Eva Smith by drinking disinfectant, and starts to question Mr Birling. He shows Mr Birling a photograph of the girl, who turns out to have worked for Mr Birling's firm and to have been dismissed for trying to obtain a pay rise and going on strike. The Inspector goes on to question Sheila, who admits her jealousy of Eva because of the way she looked in a dress that Sheila had tried on at a clothes shop. Her complaints about the girl's rudeness contributed to Eva losing her job at the shop that she had secured after being fired from Birling's. After this, it emerges that Gerald had an affair with Eva during the previous summer.

In Act 2, Gerald talks about his relationship with Eva Smith (who was also known as Daisy Renton). They had an affair for a few months, but Gerald ended it, leaving Daisy homeless, heartbroken and with very little money. When Gerald leaves the house, the Inspector turns his questioning on Mrs Birling and the audience learns that she had refused Eva's begging for help when she was pregnant and had no money to survive. Mrs Birling also states that the man who got Eva pregnant should admit his guilt and take responsibility for his actions, refusing to take any responsibility herself.

In Act 3, Eric, the Birlings' son, returns from a walk and becomes the next person to be questioned by Inspector Goole; he also confesses to a relationship with Eva, which had led to her pregnancy. Eric admits that he gave her money at first, but that she refused to take it when she learned that it was stolen from Mr Birling's office. At this point, Inspector Goole leaves, after making a speech about the need for rich people like the Birlings and the Crofts to take responsibility for the Eva Smiths of the world and making a subtle prediction about the coming war. There is a bitter family argument, with all of the family blaming each other. Gerald returns and announces that the Inspector is a fake. They call the police station and are told that there is no Inspector Goole employed there. They check with the local hospital and are told that no girl has committed suicide that night. There is a great sense of relief and the family concludes that the whole story was a bluff. Sheila and Eric argue with their parents. At this point, the phone rings. It is the police, who are ringing because a girl has committed suicide. It seems that an inspector is on his way to ask them some questions about this suicide.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

An Inspector Calls has been accused of being crude and unsubtle in the way that it presents its politics, with the play simply presenting the upper classes as bad and the working classes as their innocent victims, using Inspector Goole simply as a mouthpiece for Priestley's own views. What do you think of this criticism of the play? Is it justified or not?

CHARACTERS

GENERAL VOCABULARY

bluff an attempt to deceive someone by making them think you will do something when you do not intend to do it

mouthpiece a person that expresses the opinions of another person

portentous trying to appear important and serious

provincial old-fashioned and not interested in anything new or different – a word used to show disapproval

intimidate to frighten or threaten someone into making them do what you want

knighthood a British rank and title which is given to a man as an honour for achievement or for doing good things

complacent so pleased with a situation, especially something you have achieved, so that you stop trying to improve or change things – a word used to show disapproval

MR ARTHUR BIRLING

- a 'heavy-looking, rather portentous man in his middle fifties but rather provincial in his speech'
- proud of his achievements, such as having been mayor
- keen to impress, and even intimidate, the Inspector with his friends and position in society
- equally keen to impress those whom he considers above him in society (such as Gerald's parents)
- delighted about the engagement party, but not just for the sake of his daughter; it is a good business opportunity for him as well, as Gerald is the son of his competitor
- not good at assessing current issues, he is sure that there will not be a war and that the *Titanic* is unsinkable
- a very selfish man, who wants to look after himself and his family above everything else
- worried that his knighthood may not be given to him if there is any scandal over Eva
- determined to protect his reputation
- opposed to new ideas, such as socialism
- unable to learn to accept responsibility, complacent, set in his ways

MRS SYBIL BIRLING

- 'about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior'
- quite a snob
- lacking in respect for the Inspector and arrogant in her attitudes towards him
- often regards Sheila and Eric as still being children rather than adults

- in denial over Eric's drinking problems;
- capable of acting in a prejudiced way because of her strict principles
- still refusing at the end of the play to accept that she has done anything wrong

SHEILA BIRLING

- 'a pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited'
- perceptive, intelligent and curious; quick to realise the truth about people, for example when it is revealed that Gerald knew Daisy Renton/Eva Smith
- finds Eva very sympathetic when she hears how her father treated her
- horrified to discover that she has played a part in Eva Smith's deterioration
- the first to express doubts about whether the Inspector is a real inspector
- growing in maturity as the play progresses and in many ways is much wiser by the end of it
- angry with her parents because they 'pretend that nothing much has happened'
- able to accept fully her own responsibility and that of others in the family for what happened to Eva

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sympathetic applied to a character in fiction, this means a character who is liked by the reader or other characters

ERIC BIRLING

- 'in his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive'
- embarrassed and rather awkward
- a heavy drinker
- feeling guilty about how he treated Eva and, by the end of the play, prepared to accept his responsibility
- ashamed of what his actions had led to
- more concerned about what happened to the girl than the fact that he had stolen from the firm
- able to stand up to his father in the end and tell him he disagrees with his attitudes
- prepared to stand with Sheila in opposing his parents' wishes to cover up the events

GENERAL VOCABULARY

man-about-town a fashionable man who is keen on social activities and entertainment

GERALD CROFT

- 'an attractive chap about thirty, rather too manly to be a dandy but very much the easy well-bred man-about-town'
- very well born, from an aristocratic family, son of Sir George and Lady Croft and socially superior to the Birling family

- unwilling at first to admit anything, as he pretends not to have known the girl; is very moved when he hears of her death
- suspicious that the Inspector is not genuine
- someone who, at the end of the play, has learned very little, much like Mr and Mrs Birling

GENERAL VOCABULARY

disconcerting making you feel slightly confused, embarrassed or worried

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

omniscient knowing everything within the world of the novel or play, including the secrets of all the characters and what the future holds

INSPECTOR GOOLE

- a man who creates 'an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness. He is a man in his fifties, dressed in a plain darkish suit. He speaks carefully, weightily, and has a disconcerting habit of looking hard at the person he addresses before actually speaking.'
- someone who works in a very methodical way, facing suspects with facts to make them speak
- a figure of great authority and firmness
- someone with a great amount of knowledge about Eva Smith/Daisy Renton and the Birling family; clearly perceptive
- able to tell seemingly what is going to happen; appears omniscient
- a man with a strong message for the characters and audience; provides a voice for Priestley and his views
- a mystery figure – is he real? Is he an inspector? Is he a ghost? How does he know so much?

EVA SMITH/DAISY RENTON

- not strictly speaking a character in the play, as she is dead and never appears on stage
- described as 'very pretty'
- said to be the daughter of parents who had died
- a working-class girl from the country
- something of a mystery, who keeps the characters guessing
- brave and unafraid to ask for a raise in her wages
- someone with principles as she would not accept stolen money
- representative of people who are treated unfairly by the upper/middle classes

▶ A notebook

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** PROBLEM SOLVING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, TEAMWORK

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Part of the mystery of the play is created by questions about the character of the Inspector himself. It seems clear that he is not really an inspector from the local police force, because the characters have this checked out. Consider the following questions.

- Is he meant to be a ghost? Consider the possible pun on Goole and 'ghoul'.
- Is he the playwright's own voice?
- Is he a voice of a powerful God offering a warning?
- Is he a voice that acts as the conscience of all of the characters?
- Is he a voice which represents knowledge from the future?

What other ideas do you have? If possible, share these with a partner or in a group. What evidence in the play is there to support your conclusion?

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

pun an amusing use of a word or phrase that has two meanings, or of words that have the same sound but different meanings

GENERAL VOCABULARY

ghoul a ghost

THEMES

RESPONSIBILITY

From his first appearance, the Inspector introduces the idea of people being responsible for helping others and taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions. This is central to the whole play, with this compassionate view contrasted with a self-interested view that is represented in particular by Mr Birling. There is an obvious opposition between Mr Birling's early statement that 'a man has to make his own way – has to look after himself – and his family too, of course, when he has one – and so long as he does that he won't come to much harm', and Inspector Goole's statement much later on that 'We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other'. These two statements represent the two contrasting attitudes towards responsibility that underpin the play: the individualistic view and the social view. The Inspector's statement is obviously the one which the play encourages the audience to agree with and the one which is closest to Priestley's own views. This is the view that everyone has a collective responsibility within society. Priestley presents each character as having a slightly different attitude towards responsibility. Sheila, for example, quickly sees the Inspector's point and feels guilty about getting Eva Smith fired even before knowing about the suicide. She also continues to feel guilt even after it is revealed that the story about the suicide was probably a trick. Gerald on the other hand feels a brief sense of responsibility, but this disappears once he believes that no suicide has taken place.

▶ **Do you think the play could effectively persuade people to change their views about responsibility? Is Inspector Goole entirely correct about being responsible 'for each other' or is there possibly some merit to Mr Birling's individualist view too?**

HINT

It is important to recognise that this is a play where many things are uncertain and where several different possibilities exist side by side. Inspector Goole might be a ghost or figure from the future or he might be the voice of conscience, but this is never confirmed. Nor is it confirmed whether Eva Smith or Daisy Renton are meant to be the same person, nor who the girl who commits suicide at the end of the play is. In your exam answer you should recognise this coexistence of different possibilities, providing evidence to support the possibility that you find most convincing.

SOCIAL CLASS

An Inspector Calls is set in a period when the divisions between the upper, middle and working classes were very marked. This is reflected in the play, primarily through the clear division between the difficult life of Eva Smith and the privileged life of the Birlings and the Crofts. However, it is also reflected in the fact that while Mr Birling is rich and privileged he is also very aware of the classes which exist above him. He recognises that Gerald's parents have higher status than he does and might look down on him. He is eager to gain a knighthood so that he can reach a higher level of society. Mr Birling is an industrialist who has made his money by owning a factory, rather than being a true aristocrat who inherits wealth. The inequalities of the class system were one of Priestley's great personal concerns and what Inspector Goole argues for is essentially a reordering of the class system in order to make it more equal and just. This kind of reordering was one of the aims of the Welfare State, which was being put in place in Britain around the time that *An Inspector Calls* was being written.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

If Daisy Renton, Eva Smith and the woman who appealed to Mrs Birling's committee are all meant to be the same person, as the Inspector suggests, then it is a huge coincidence that her life should have become so closely involved on separate occasions with all five members of the Birling dinner party in the way the play suggests. In fact this coincidence is so great that it is not really believable. If you accept that Eva/Daisy is not one person, then what does this suggest about her role in the play. What is she or what does she represent if she is not a single individual?

GENERAL VOCABULARY

aristocrat someone who belongs to the highest social class

hardships something that makes your life difficult or unpleasant, especially a lack of money, or the condition of having a difficult life

mistresses women that a man has a sexual relationship with, even though he is married to someone else

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Gender and the position of women are explored throughout the play. The figure of Eva Smith represents the particular hardships attached to lower-class women, who not only suffer poverty and insecurity, but also moral judgement and shame if they are forced into becoming mistresses or prostitutes. This judgement is expressed particularly clearly in Mrs Birling's statements about Eva. It is then interesting to note that Mrs Birling seems far less judgemental towards her son Eric when it is revealed that he was Eva's lover and the father of her child. Eva Smith is therefore doubly a victim of society because she is a woman as well as being working class.

Differing attitudes towards the position of women are also connected to the strong feeling of a generation gap that runs through this play. Mr Birling seems to view the marriage between Sheila and Gerald as being about producing a union between the two families and possibly bringing their two businesses together, more than about the love between them. However, when Sheila learns of Gerald's affair she quickly ends the engagement, suggesting a very different attitude towards marriage; one that is based on trust and love between them as individuals rather than wider political and business arrangements.

▶ **Do you think that Mrs Birling would have ended her own engagement in the same way that Sheila does, if the circumstances had been the same?**

YOUTH AND AGE

While the older Birlings remain fixed in their views, Eric and Sheila seem to be more open to change. Sheila already feels guilty about Eva Smith even before she learns of the suicide and Eric is already starting to express socialist ideas at the start of the play while the Inspector is questioning Mr Birling. While the older Birlings quickly return to their original state of mind when they are convinced the Inspector was not real, Sheila and Eric insist that they should all still feel guilty and examine their actions, because they still did the things they have confessed regardless of whether the suicide happened or not. Sheila, for

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

ironic using words to convey a meaning that is completely opposite to their apparent meaning example, ironically states that 'I suppose we're all nice people now'. Mr Birling also refers explicitly to the idea of a generation gap at the start of the play, referring to Eric and Gerald as 'young fellows' and 'youngsters'. All of this suggests the social importance of changes that are occurring across the generations.

KEY POINT

This is a play that is built around a number of splits: splits between the classes, splits between the genders and splits between the generations. It is therefore very much about a society that is changing and where old traditions and conventions are giving way to new ones.

- **If there is a generational split between the young Birlings (Eric and Sheila) and the old Birlings (Mr and Mrs Birling), then where does Gerald fit in? He is the age of the younger characters and, like them, he does seem to feel genuine remorse over his actions. However, he also agrees with Mr Birling that Eva should leave.**

THE SUPERNATURAL

Inspector Goole's name makes the audience ask whether he is a 'ghoul', or ghost, who represents the spirit of Eva Smith. The fact that he seems to have knowledge of all of the other characters' thoughts and past actions also suggests that he might represent some kind of divine presence. As the characters themselves point out, it is also a huge coincidence that the Inspector arrives just as Mr Birling is making his speech about the need for a man to look after himself and not be concerned with others.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

remorse a strong feeling of being sorry that you have done something very bad

whodunnit a story or play in which a crime or murder is committed by an unknown person, with the identity revealed at the end

There is also a feeling of the supernatural about the end of the play, where Mr Birling is informed that a girl has committed suicide by drinking disinfectant and that an inspector is on the way to question them. This suggests that the events of the play have happened out of time and before the event that caused them had actually occurred. It also suggests that the story is about to begin again from the beginning with an inspector walking in to question the family. Taken to the extreme, this might lead you to believe that Gerald and the Birlings are trapped in an endless loop with inspectors endlessly calling on the house, questioning them and leaving again only for the arrival of another inspector to be announced!

STAGECRAFT AND SETTING

THE DETECTIVE THRILLER

The play is not exactly like a conventional detective thriller, but it does have elements of a whodunnit?. These elements include the presence of the Inspector throughout, who in some ways resembles other famous fictional detectives, such as Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot. They also include the repeated moments where a guilty secret is dramatically revealed, such as when Sheila realises Eva is the girl she had fired, Gerald confesses his affair and Eric is revealed as the father of Eva's child. Of course, as none of the characters has committed any actual crime, it is really an attempt to answer the moral question of 'who was responsible for it?'. The idea that all of the characters should share responsibility for the 'crime', rather than one single individual being responsible, fits the ideals of social interdependence that the play puts forward. Notice too how Priestley uses a particularly unpleasant and painful form of suicide (drinking disinfectant) so that it has much of the shock that would accompany an actual murder.

▲ David Suchet as Agatha Christie's fictional detective, Hercule Poirot

THE ONE-ROOM FORMAT

An Inspector Calls uses the form of the 'drawing-room play', where all of the action is set in a single communal room. This is not something that Priestley himself invented and, at times, the play has been criticised for using existing conventions lazily. However, it is important to recognise how Priestley exploits this format for dramatic effect. The fact that the audience is never allowed to see anything outside of the dining room makes everything that is described about the outside world less certain. The identity of Eva Smith/Daisy Renton is made much less clear because the audience is never allowed to see her. Likewise, Inspector Goole's identity remains far more mysterious because the audience is never allowed to see him outside of the drawing room and see who he really is. Again, this is an effect which Priestley deliberately produces by exploiting dramatic convention.

▶ **What does Priestley's decision to keep all the Birling characters isolated in one set of rooms throughout the play communicate about their class position and their connection to the rest of society?**

ACTIVITY 3 **A02** **SKILLS** REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Read carefully through the stage directions at the beginning of Act 1. List the main features of the room and the furnishings and note the way in which the author describes the room. These details are meant to help the director and producer of the play to reproduce the right setting for *An Inspector Calls*. How do the details which Priestley provides represent the Birling household and help to communicate the meaning of the play? Remember that all three Acts take place in the same room.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

furnishings the furniture and other things, such as curtains, in a room

LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

slang informal language, often associated with a particular social group or class

didactic language speech or writing that is intended to teach people a moral lesson

HINT

You can refer to Mr and Mrs Birling's northern dialects to talk about their class position; both rich and important, but also with working roots and therefore beneath true aristocrats like Gerald's parents, as is shown by their relatively common and unsophisticated speech.

COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE

The play uses upper-class slang of the period: for example, when Eric is described as 'squiffy' (meaning 'drunk'). This helps to communicate the upper-class lifestyles of Gerald Croft and the Birlings. This is mixed, however, with Priestley's use of a Yorkshire dialect. Priestley himself was from Yorkshire and the direct and straightforward language of both Mr and Mrs Birling reflects the Northern setting of the play in the fictional town of Brumley, with Priestley describing Mr Birling as being 'rather provincial in his speech'.

NAMES AND PUNS

There seems to be a pun at the heart of the play: the name of the Inspector – 'Goole' – is a pun on 'ghoul', meaning ghost. How you interpret this is very important to your view of the play. While not a pun, the choice of the name 'Smith' for Eva Smith is also significant. Using one of the most common possible British surnames available allows Priestley to present Eva as a representative of millions of other people in her class, rather than just as a single individual. As Inspector Goole says, 'There are millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left.' The fact that Eva is also given several different names throughout the play also helps to communicate the sense that she is representative of a group of individuals.

DIDACTIC LANGUAGE

The Inspector is the main character who uses didactic language, which is meant to teach the audience a lesson or point out the rights and wrongs in the Birling family and in society. Indeed, the play as a whole should be seen as a work of didactic theatre that is actively trying make the audience understand the importance of its message and influence their actions.

▶ **Which words describe how you are left feeling at the end of the play? Do you think this was the effect Priestley intended, and why?**

ACTIVITY 4 **A01** **A02** **SKILLS** INTERPRETATION, CREATIVITY

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Look through the following list of words that have been used to describe characters in the play. Copy and complete the table below, matching the words with the characters. You may find that some adjectives describe more than one character.

manipulative
stern
unrepentant
controlling
masterful
pompous
courageous
perceptive
self-important
untruthful
mature
prejudiced
unfeeling
determined
relieved
snobbish
kind
heartless
arrogant
cruel
unfaithful
superior

▼ CHARACTER	▼ QUALITIES
The Inspector	
Mr Birling	
Sheila	
Eric	
Gerald	

DID YOU KNOW?

An Inspector Calls was first performed in Russia, which was under Socialist rule at the time, rather than England. This was because no suitable theatre was available in London. However, English right-wing Conservatives, who hated Priestley's left-wing politics, spread rumours that it was because English theatres had all rejected the play.

KEY POINT

Priestley carefully uses the language of names and naming to suggest that Eva Smith may be representative of a group or class rather than a single individual.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

unrepentant not ashamed of your behaviour or beliefs, even though other people disapprove

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your response.

1 How is social class important in *An Inspector Calls*? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

2 'There are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives.' (Inspector Goole).

Explore how the connections between people are presented in *An Inspector Calls.* You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

3 Explore Priestley's presentation of Gerald Croft in *An Inspector Calls*. You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

4 '... a man has to make his own way – has to look after himself – and his family too, of course, when he has one – and so long as he does that he won't come to much harm.' (Mr Birling).

Show how this statement is important within *An Inspector Calls*. You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 How does J.B. Priestley explore attitudes to gender in *An Inspector Calls*? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 Priestley explores the position of women [1] in 1912 through the tragic death of Eva Smith. She is a victim of the irresponsible actions of male and female members of the Birling family. It is interesting that by the end of the play, Sheila Birling is one of the most deeply affected by Eva's story. Sheila's new sense of social responsibility [2] could reflect the growing political role of women due to the suffrage movement in the early twentieth century.

Eva Smith is never seen on stage, but Gerald describes her as 'very pretty – soft brown hair and big dark eyes'. There are constant references to her pretty physical appearance [3], and Sheila admits that she felt threatened and undermined by Eva's beauty, and this is why she has Eva fired from her job at Milwards. Eva's prettiness adds to her vulnerability.

[1] AO4: You need to refer to the historical context to explore gender in the text.

[2] AO4: By focusing on Sheila, there is an opportunity to explore the theme of social responsibility and how this links to gender.

[3] AO2: Look for patterns in how characters are described – this is one way to explore language.

FURTHER READING

If you choose to read any of these works, you should compare and contrast them with the piece you have studied and how they add to your understanding of it. You should think about language, style, format, themes, plot, characters and context.

- *Out of the People* (1941) by J.B. Priestley
- *Dangerous Corner* (1932) by J.B. Priestley
- *Time and the Conways* (1937) by J.B. Priestley

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME
SIMON STEPHENS

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time was first staged in 2012 at the National Theatre in London, UK. It has since been shown in the West End in London and on Broadway in New York, which are two of the most prestigious theatre districts in the world. The script was written by British playwright Simon Stephens and is an adaptation of the novel of the same name.

The novel was written by Mark Haddon and first published in 2003. Haddon received many offers to adapt his novel, but did not think that the story would work on stage. He eventually became curious and approached Stephens to write the adaptation because he was a fan of his plays. Although it is not explicitly stated, many audience members and readers of the novel identify the lead character, Christopher, as having some form of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Simon Stephens was born in Manchester in the UK in 1971. Before becoming a professional playwright, he worked as a teacher. He has written numerous plays and his work has been performed across Europe and in the USA.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

Autism Spectrum Disorder a lifelong condition that affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with other people and has an impact on the way in which they perceive the world around them

ACTIVITY 1 **A01** **A02** **SKILLS** PROBLEM SOLVING, INTERPRETATION, EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

▼ ADAPTING A NOVEL FOR THE STAGE

Simon Stephens's play is an adaptation of a novel. Why do you think the playwright chose not to structure the play into individual scenes? What effect does this have on the audience?

Consider other ways in which you might structure the play and how this may alter its meaning. Take a small section of the play and adapt it to fit your new form.

PLOT

GENERAL VOCABULARY

caution	a British legal warning given to someone who has committed an offence but has not been charged with a crime
A-level	'Advanced level' exams taken in Britain, usually the end of schooling at the age of 17 or 18
lashes out	hits or kicks at someone or something
recounts	tells someone a story or describes a series of events

PART 1

The play opens with Christopher discovering the dead body of Wellington, the dog that belongs to his neighbour, Mrs Shears. The events are described by Siobhan, Christopher's teacher, who is reading from the book that Christopher has written.

Mrs Shears immediately suspects Christopher of killing her dog and orders him to leave her garden. Christopher backs away from Wellington and lies on the floor groaning. When a police officer arrives and attempts to force Christopher to get up, Christopher lashes out and hits him. Christopher is then arrested for attack. At the police station, he is let off with a caution, after his father, Ed, explains that Christopher did not mean to hurt the police officer.

Reading from Christopher's story, Siobhan describes the disappearance of Christopher's mother, Judy, two years earlier. She recounts Ed telling Christopher that Judy has died of a heart attack. Now, Christopher decides to investigate Wellington's death, despite Ed telling him not to do so. Christopher also explains that, if his school will allow him to, he is planning to take his A-level mathematics exam shortly.

Shortly after he starts to question his other neighbours regarding Wellington's death, Christopher meets Mrs Alexander. Mrs Alexander is unaware that Christopher's mother is dead. She inadvertently reveals that she knows why Christopher's father dislikes Roger Shears, who is Mrs Shears's ex-husband. When Christopher presses her to tell him, Mrs Alexander reveals that his mother was having an affair with Roger.

Christopher has been documenting his search for Wellington's killer in a notebook. Ed finds this notebook and, in a rage, he hits Christopher and they fight. Ed takes the notebook away.

Later, while Ed is out, Christopher goes looking for his notebook and finds it in a box full of letters that are all addressed to him. He opens and reads one of the letters and discovers that the letter and all of the other letters are from his mother. She explains that she left because she fell in love with Roger, that she did not feel that she was a good mother to Christopher and that she felt that Christopher and Ed were better without her.

Ed finds Christopher lying silently next to the open letters. He apologises and tells Christopher that he had not known how to explain the situation to him. He confesses that he was the one who killed Wellington and explains that he did it after his relationship with Mrs Shears ended. Although Ed insists that Christopher can trust him, Christopher is afraid that Ed may hurt him and decides he can no longer live at home. He decides that his only option is to travel to London to find his mother and live with her.

PART 2

Christopher makes his way to the railway station, where the station policeman notices him, due to his unusual behaviour just as he gets on the train to London. The train leaves Swindon before the policeman is able to take him home. Before they get to the next station, Christopher hides in the luggage rack to escape the policeman and to avoid the other passengers.

▲ A real train in the UK

▲ The staged interpretation of Christopher's train journey

Once he arrives in London, Christopher goes towards the London Underground. When his pet rat, Toby, escapes and climbs on to the tracks, Christopher is unaware of how dangerous it is and climbs down to rescue the rat. Eventually, Christopher arrives at the address included in his mother's letters, which is a flat that she shares with Roger. They allow Christopher to stay, but Judy and Roger's relationship starts to become strained. They argue about whether it is practical for Christopher to live with them and Judy loses her job after taking two days off to look after her son.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

penknife	a small knife designed to be kept in a pocket with a blade that folds away into the handle
bedsit	a rented room used for both living and sleeping in

Uninvited, Ed comes to the flat and demands to see his son. Christopher is afraid of his father and tries to defend himself with his penknife so that Ed leaves. Judy then informs Christopher's school that his mathematics exam must be delayed, despite Christopher's protests.

Roger is unable to understand Christopher's behaviour and becomes increasingly frustrated by his presence. One night, when Roger is drunk, he shouts at Christopher. Soon afterwards, Judy wakes Christopher in the middle of the night and they return to Swindon without Roger.

Back in Swindon, Christopher and Judy move into a bedsit. When Christopher returns to school, Siobhan tells him that he can still take his mathematics exam. As he has neither eaten nor slept, Christopher panics and is initially unable to understand the questions on the exam paper, but Siobhan calms him. Later, Ed visits Christopher at his new home and tells him that he is proud of him, but Christopher is still terrified of Ed and hides in his room. Ed promises to earn Christopher's trust, no matter how long it takes, and buys him a puppy that Christopher names Sandy.

Christopher gets an A on his mathematics exam and continues to rebuild his relationship with his father. They begin to spend time together without Judy having to be present to reassure Christopher. While talking to Siobhan, Christopher describes his plans for the future, telling her that as he has written a book, found his mother, been to London on his own and identified Wellington's killer, he believes that he can achieve many other things. Finally, he explains to the audience how he solved one of the questions from his exam.

▶ **Why is mathematics so important to Christopher?**

CHARACTERS

- **Consider this statement: 'Christopher values honesty above everything else.' Do you agree?**
- **Which character does Christopher trust the most?**

GENERAL VOCABULARY

inquisitive	interested in a lot of different things and wanting to find out more about them
juvenile	child-like or immature
wary	careful because you think something might be dangerous or harmful

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

metaphor	describing something by comparing it to an image which it resembles, in a way that says the object *is* the image
idiom	a popularly-used phrase, often localised, with a meaning that is not explicit from the individual words used
narrator	a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

CHRISTOPHER

- 15 years old
- searching for Wellington's killer
- confused by people
- confused by metaphor and idiom
- a talented mathematics student
- inquisitive
- interested in computers and machines
- not good at reading facial expressions
- determined to get an A grade in his A-level mathematics exam
- highly observant
- juvenile: he is highly dependent on his father and mother; his journey to London and investigation into Wellington's death are his first experiences of independence
- an animal lover
- scared of the unknown
- wary of strangers
- usually honest
- proud of his achievements
- planning for the future

SIOBHAN

- 27 years old
- Christopher's teacher
- the narrator of the play; she reads from Christopher's book
- Christopher's trusted advisor; someone that Christopher can trust and talk to
- suspicious of Ed; when she notices a bruise on Christopher's face, she asks Christopher about it and becomes concerned for his safety
- trustworthy and kind
- a calming influence on Christopher

JUDY

- Christopher's mother
- full of guilt
- insecure about her abilities as a mother
- protective of Christopher
- puts Christopher before her personal life
- short-tempered; she shouts at Christopher when he does not understand
- angry with Ed for telling Christopher that she was dead

ED

- Christopher's father
- patient and caring
- dishonest
- scared of losing Christopher
- determined that Christopher's limitations will not restrict his education; he is eager for the school to allow Christopher to take the A-level mathematics exam
- struggling to cope with loss; he tells Christopher that Judy died rather than explaining that she had an affair and did not know how to look after him
- angry with Judy for leaving him and Christopher
- angry with Roger Shears for breaking up his marriage
- angry with Mrs Shears for ending their relationship
- determined to earn Christopher's trust

GENERAL VOCABULARY

indiscreet failing to keep a secret

MRS ALEXANDER

- Christopher and Ed's neighbour
- friendly, but indiscreet
- a grandmother
- lonely; she is very eager to continue her conversations with Christopher
- irresponsible; she tells Christopher about his mother's affair with Roger Shears, even though she is worried about how he and Ed would react
- worried that Christopher might tell Ed that he knows about his mother's affair

THEMES

DISHONESTY

> I want you to know that you can trust me. Life is difficult, you know. It's bloody hard telling the truth all the time. But I want you to know that I'm trying… Because if you don't tell the truth now, then later on it hurts even more. So… I killed Wellington. Just… let me explain.

Many of the characters are guilty of dishonesty and there are many different kinds of dishonesty featured in the play. Ed lies to Christopher about his mother: first he says that Judy is in hospital and then that she has died. By the time Christopher finds out, these lies are more than two years old, but they are important. They add to the audience's understanding of Ed and Christopher as individuals and of their relationship with each other. Ed does not tell Christopher the truth because he knows how highly Christopher values honesty and he fears that confessing will break Christopher's trust in him. When Siobhan reads Christopher's description of the day that Ed told him that Judy had been admitted to hospital, the level of detail in the description makes it obvious that it is an important memory, even though the vocabulary that Stephens chooses is not explicitly emotional. The fact that Christopher has recorded the event in his book and that Siobhan and Christopher include the detailed description in their theatrical adaptation reinforces this.

Christopher tells the police officer that he never lies, but he is guilty of lies of omission. A lie of omission is not an explicit lie, where someone says something that is untrue, but it is a form of dishonesty as it is withholding the truth by not including certain pieces of information. For example, he does not reveal to his father that he has continued his investigation into Wellington's death.

An extension of this theme is Christopher's inability to understand metaphors and similes, and he states that he '[does not] like acting because it is pretending that something is real when it is not really real at all so it is like a kind of lie.'

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

simile similar to a metaphor, a description that says that an object is *like* an image rather than that *it is* the image

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ TELLING LIES

Lying and dishonesty feature heavily in the play. In the table below, write down some examples of lies and dishonesty in the play. Next to them, describe the repercussions of each lie.

▼ LIES AND DISHONESTY IN THE PLAY	▼ THE REPERCUSSIONS

▶ **Do you think the play has a specific message about dishonesty?**

GENERAL VOCABULARY

repercussions the consequences or results of an action

empathise to be able to understand someone else's feelings and problems, especially because you have had similar experiences

EMPATHY

> I find people confusing. This is for two main reasons. The first main reason is that people do a lot of talking without using words.

Christopher frequently comes into conflict with other people because he cannot empathise with them or understand their feelings, behaviour and facial expressions. Christopher's behaviour can also be confusing for others, because he has different needs to most people. While those close to him understand this, strangers such as the people at the railway station do not. Stephens establishes this theme right at the beginning of the play. Because the police officer does not know that Christopher does not like to be touched, their interaction results in Christopher hitting him. This creates tension, as the audience knows that when Christopher is with strangers, there is potential for conflict and misunderstanding.

▲ Christopher travelling to London

DID YOU KNOW?

Empathy and sympathy sound similar and sometimes they are used interchangeably. However, they actually mean different things.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

empathy the ability to share or appreciate the feelings, point of view or emotional response of another person (or animal); not to be confused with sympathy
sympathy feeling sorry for another person or animal because of their misfortune
spouse a husband or wife

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbolism using symbols to represent particular concepts or ideas

LOSS

> I don't feel sad about it because Mother is dead and Mr Shears isn't around any more. So I would be feeling sad about something that isn't real and doesn't exist and that would be stupid.

Simon Stephens explores the theme of loss through his characters' reactions to loss and their fear of loss. The play begins with the discovery of Wellington's dead body, which symbolises the loss of a friend for Christopher and a pet for Mrs Shears. The audience later learns that Wellington's death was the result of Ed's loss of a relationship with Mrs Shears and that both Ed and Mrs Shears have experienced the loss of a spouse. Ed's inability to cope with losing Judy or to explain to Christopher why she left causes him to lie to Christopher, telling him instead that she has died. This lie then results in the temporary loss of their relationship.

Loss is also explored as something to be avoided. For example, Ed is determined that Christopher does not lose opportunities because of his limitations.

Christopher's entire journey throughout *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* can be seen as one of loss of innocence or the end of his childhood. He is exposed to his parents' flaws and complex adult relationships that he is unable to understand and he must try to accept these things.

FAMILY

> I was not a very good mother, Christopher. Maybe if things had been different, maybe if you'd been different, I might have been better at it. But that's just the way things turned out. I'm not like your father. Your father is a much more patient person. He just gets on with things and if things upset him he doesn't let it show.

The play explores the family unit and the fragile nature of relationships. Ed and Judy struggle to balance the breakdown of their marriage and their new romantic relationships with their duties as parents. The audience later see Judy's insecurities about her ability to look after a child with specific requirements and the repercussions of her affair for her and her family.

ACTIVITY 3 **A01** **A04** **SKILLS** PROBLEM SOLVING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

▼ CHRISTOPHER AND THE OTHER CHARACTERS

Christopher's unique perspective makes it difficult for other characters to empathise with him. Find examples in the play of situations where other characters find it difficult to empathise with Christopher and explain your reasoning.

What devices does the playwright use to make the audience empathise with Christopher? Write down as many as you can. Discuss and compare your list with a partner or in small groups.

▶ **How successful do you think the playwright is in creating empathy?**

STAGECRAFT AND SETTING

GENRE

The play's title is taken from Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventures of Silver Blaze*, which featured Sherlock Holmes, perhaps the most famous fictional detective. Christopher's story begins with the discovery of Wellington's corpse and his subsequent search for the killer. The play can be seen as a detective story or a murder mystery, but the initial mystery is solved at the end of Part 1. This suggests that this mystery is only the first layer of the more complex mysteries of human interactions that Christopher must try to solve.

In Part 2, the play is heavily concerned with family relationships. As a result of the breakdown of the relationship with his father, Christopher travels to London in an attempt to reunite with his mother. The play can therefore be seen as a family drama. Christopher's story is ultimately one of self-discovery, as he learns to overcome challenges by himself. It can therefore also be viewed as a coming-of-age narrative (or *bildungsroman*), as Christopher grows and learns to survive in the world independently of his parents.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrative the story or plot

bildungsroman a German word, meaning 'novel of education', that has been adopted into the English language; it refers to a story in which a character develops psychologically and morally, as they mature from childhood into adulthood

STRUCTURE

Unlike most plays, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is not split into distinct scenes, but rather, as the stage direction instructs: 'Scenes run into each other regardless of alterations in space or time or chronology'. This creates a chaotic and confusing effect for the audience and is used to reflect Christopher's difficulty in understanding the world around him.

A key difference between the novel and the play is Stephens's use of the 'play within a play' device. By using this concept, Stephens suggests that Mark Haddon's novel is the book that Christopher has written. Early in Part 1, Siobhan suggests to Christopher that they adapt his book for stage and, while Christopher initially refuses, the audience learns at the end of Part 2 that they 'turned it into a play'. This implies that Stephens's play is actually Christopher and Siobhan's adaptation of the book and that the action they have been watching is part of their play. This raises the idea of multiple and differing perspectives.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

chronology the order in which things happen

ENSEMBLE CAST

The character list shows that Stephens intended the cast to be an ensemble cast and play multiple roles, although this would ultimately be decided by the director. For example, the actor playing Mrs Shears would also play Mrs Gascoyne. The very first stage direction says that 'All actors remain on stage unless prescribed otherwise'. The manner in which Stephens intends the play to utilise an ensemble is a device to help the audience to understand and share Christopher's experience of the world. Actors playing the roles of Siobhan, Ed and Judy fulfil one role only, while the smaller characters are played by actors performing a number of roles. The audience is not aware of what the ensemble actors will say, of course, but more importantly they are not aware of who – which character – an actor will be at any given moment.

This separates the characters into two distinct groups: people with whom Christopher is comfortable and familiar (major characters, with the exception of Mrs Alexander) and strangers, or people who do not know him well enough to understand his needs. The 'strangers' are unpredictable to Christopher and the audience. The fact that they are always present on stage creates tension, as the audience is aware that Christopher will struggle when faced with new people or experiences. Their presence reflects that the outside world is always close by, regardless of whether Christopher is willing to interact with it.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

ensemble cast in theatre, a technique where a group performance is used to create the world of the play, rather than focusing on individual performances; all cast members appear on stage at the same time, sometimes for the entire play; often, but not always, actors in an ensemble play multiple roles

NARRATION

The play features multiple narrators, including Christopher, Siobhan (as she reads from Christopher's book) and the Voices. The Voices are played by other members of the ensemble cast and narrate small sections of the play. They represent the outside world that Christopher does not understand, such as metaphors that confuse him, the signs and slogans that overwhelm him and the crowds of other passengers at the railway station which scare him. Stephens uses the Voices to make the audience experience Christopher's confusion and empathise with him as he struggles on his journey.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

Consider the function of the Voices in the play. Can you think of an alternative way of achieving the same effect?

SETTING

Part 1 is set in Christopher's hometown and in places that are familiar to him, such as his home, street and school. Part 2 takes Christopher into the wider world: the streets of Swindon, at the railway station and the train, in London and finally back in Swindon. While the year is not specified, the advertising slogans and brand names that are mentioned by the Voices suggest that it is the present, or very recent past.

There are relatively few stage directions and it is often unclear when and where the action is taking place, as scenes blend into each other and the narrative is non-linear. Near the end of Part 2, it is revealed that Siobhan and Christopher adapted Christopher's book and that the audience is watching their adaptation of it.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

non-linear does not follow a straight line in terms of chronology or setting

LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

METAPHOR

The Voices list examples of metaphors to highlight their non-literal nature and to illustrate why Christopher finds them confusing and dishonest. Other characters use metaphor, idiom and slang easily, but Christopher does not.

JUXTAPOSITION

Ed and Judy are frequently juxtaposed and this invites the audience to compare them. An example of this is their different treatment of the A-level mathematics exam. Ed has fought for Christopher to have the opportunity to take this exam, but it is not an immediate priority for Judy. Another point of comparison is how Ed and Judy deal with telling Christopher that their marriage has ended. Ed lies and tells Christopher that Judy has died, while Judy is honest with him in her letters and explains why she left. This device highlights both the similarities and differences between the two characters.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

slang informal language, often associated with a particular social group or class

juxtaposed when two things are put close together in order to encourage comparison between them

dramatic irony a device, used in novels, plays, poetry and films, where the audience knows something about a situation that the character (or characters) involved does not

DRAMATIC IRONY

Christopher's inability to understand some aspects of human interaction and adult relationships mean that the audience are sometimes aware of things that he is not. Stephens uses this dramatic irony to create both humour and tension.

UNRELIABLE NARRATOR

Christopher is an unreliable narrator. Even though he is highly observant, he is not perceptive because of his difficulty in understanding people, language, and unfamiliar situations. Early in Part 1, Siobhan reads that he finds facial expressions and metaphors difficult to understand and this makes the audience aware that there are things that Christopher will not understand.

ACTIVITY 4 **AO1**

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING, CREATIVITY

▼ RELIABLE AND UNRELIABLE NARRATORS

Much of Siobhan's speech is read directly from the book that Christopher has written. Consider the following questions.

- What effect do you think this has?
- What do you think Siobhan's function is?
- What would change if Christopher was the only narrator?
- If another character was narrating, would the tone alter?

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your response.

1 How is loss of childhood innocence explored in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

2 'I find people confusing. This is for two main reasons. The first main reason is that people do a lot of talking without using words.' To what extent is empathy the key theme of the play? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

3 Compare and contrast the characters of Siobhan and Judy. You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

4 What is the significance of family in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 How does Simon Stephens present Christopher's view of the world in *A Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 The way the story is told in this play is unusual, because it is narrated by Christopher's teacher Siobhan[1], who is reading from a book written by Christopher. This means that the audience closely follows events from Christopher's perspective, hearing events told in his words[2]. In productions of the play, this often represented visually in the set design[3], with the street where he lives shown as a series of lines on the ground to illustrate how Christopher sees things very logically[4]. Haddon chooses to honestly portray Christopher's way of thinking so that the audience feels greater sympathy for him when things go wrong, while also widening the audience's understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

[1] AO2: Narrators are unusual in drama texts – you would usually use this term for novels. This comment explains briefly how Stephens borrowed from the first-person narrative of the novel that the play is based on.

[2] AO2: This could be expanded with examples of Christopher's narration explained. Can you think of some good examples?

[3] AO2: Remember it is relevant to mention set design, as this shows an understanding of form. What other methods are used in the play to demonstrate Christopher's logical view of the world?

[4] AO3: This shows some contextual awareness of the effect of the play.

FURTHER READING

If you choose to read any of these works, you should compare and contrast them with the piece you have studied and how they add to your understanding of it. You should think about language, style, format, themes, plot, characters and context.

- *Flowers for Algernon* (1959) by Daniel Keyes
- *Best Boy* (2015) by Eli Gottlieb

KINDERTRANSPORT
DIANE SAMUELS

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Diane Samuels is a British author and playwright from Liverpool in the UK. She was born into a Jewish family and educated in Jewish schools until she was 18, before receiving a history degree from the University of Cambridge and then studying to become a teacher. She worked as a drama teacher before becoming a full-time writer in 1992. Her play *Kindertransport* was first performed in London in 1993.

'Kindertransport' is the informal name given to the organised rescue efforts that brought approximately 10,000 Jewish children under the age of 17 from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Poland to Britain to be placed in foster homes before the outbreak of the Second World War. Individual people, families and organisations had to take financial responsibility for each refugee's well-being, education and eventual departure from Britain. The first refugees arrived in Harwich, Essex, on 2nd December 1938, which is the year the play is set in. Many never returned to their home countries as their parents and other relatives were murdered in the Holocaust.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

foster homes	the house of a family who takes someone else's child into their family for a period of time but without becoming their legal parent
Holocaust	the extermination of millions of Jews by the Nazi regime during the Second World War

▲ Jewish children about to be evacuated

GENERAL VOCABULARY

survivor's guilt when a person feels guilty for having survived a terrible event in which many others perished, such as the Holocaust

adoptive mother a mother who has adopted a child (taken someone else's child into their home and legally become its parent)

frantically in a way that is extremely hurried and using a lot of energy, but not very organised

mouth organ a small musical instrument that you play by blowing or sucking and moving it from side to side near your mouth; a harmonica

Three events inspired Samuels to write *Kindertransport*. Firstly, a friend described her difficulty at dealing with '**survivor's guilt**', even though it was the friend's father, rather than the friend herself, who had been a refugee on kindertransport. Secondly, another friend of Samuels's had only discovered that his mother had been in a concentration camp when he overheard her talking about her time in Auschwitz at his father's funeral. Finally, she saw a documentary about kindertransport in which a now-adult refugee explained that, even though sending her to Britain probably saved her life, she still felt angry that her parents had abandoned her. Samuels's intention in writing the play was to explore the 'universal human experience of separation of child from parent, of refugee from the source of their culture or "motherland"'

PLOT

In the play, Evelyn, a German Jewish refugee who emigrated to England during the war, is sorting through storage boxes with her daughter, Faith, who is intending to move out of their family home. The action jumps between this present day action and Evelyn's memories of herself as a little girl named Eva, as she moves to England to live with Lil, her **adoptive mother**, and gradually leaves behinds her German and Jewish heritage and family.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

The first act introduces the technique of jumping between different time frames, or having events from two different times on stage together. It begins with Helga teaching a reluctant Eva to sew buttons onto her coat. Evelyn and Faith enter the storage room and sift through boxes to identify which items Faith will take to her new house. The two pairs of characters do not seem to notice each other. Evelyn polishes glasses, increasingly **frantically**, as they discuss which items Faith will take. Faith tells her mother that she's having second thoughts about moving. Eva and Helga discuss Eva's move to England, with Helga explaining that it is the safest thing for her and that she and Eva's father will join her within a couple of months. Faith decides that she is definitely not moving out and, after Evelyn leaves the room, begins looking through other boxes and finds some of her old toys and begins playing with them. Eva hides her **mouth organ** in her suitcase without Helga noticing and Helga tells Eva that she has hidden some jewellery in the heel of one of Eva's shoes. Lil enters and tells Faith to tidy up the mess. Eva asks Helga to read her *The Ratcatcher* as her bedtime story while, in the present day, Faith discovers an old copy of the book. Helga and Faith read the story. Eva travels on the train and is questioned by a Nazi border official, who looks through her suitcase. He draws a Star of David on the label of her suitcase, but allows her to continue despite finding her mouth organ. Eva arrives in England on a ferry.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

Eva sits at an English train station speaking to Helga although she is not present. Eva says that, while she is grateful to be in England, she misses home. Meanwhile Faith reads a letter from Helga to Eva dated 1941, revealing that neither herself nor Eva's father have managed to arrive in Britain. Eva misunderstands the English Organiser, who tries to explain that her English family have been delayed, and believes that she has been abandoned and will be sent back to Germany. Lil, Eva's adoptive English mother, arrives and tells Eva that she will have to learn English. She removes the label on Eva's suitcase. Eva is shocked when Lil smokes a cigarette and Lil allows her to try smoking. Eva panics when Lil momentarily leaves her to find her some food. Faith questions Lil about Eva and after her grandmother is vague and abrupt in her responses, she realises that Evelyn is Eva. Faith is angry that her mother and grandmother had hidden the truth from her, while Lil tells her it is none of her business. Eva and Lil discuss how they will find jobs for Eva's parents to get them to England and Lil tells Eva that she does not need to follow old Jewish laws such as not eating meat from pigs. Faith comes face to face with Evelyn about her past, but she is dismissive and tells her that it is nothing to do with her. As they argue, Faith tells Evelyn that she's been a bad daughter because Evelyn is a terrible mother and that she 'could kill [her]'. Lil lunges at Faith, who runs away. Evelyn has a panic attack, hallucinating that the Ratcatcher is coming to take her away.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

Helga tells Eva that children are like jewels to their parents because people live on through their children. Evelyn has locked herself in the storage room and refuses to come out, even though Faith apologises. When he delivers a parcel, the Postman goose-steps, attempts a Nazi salute and questions Eva about Hitler and Germany. The parcel contains a letter from Helga, thanking Eva for getting permits for both Helga and Eva's father, a copy of *The Ratcatcher* and a Haggadah. In the letter, Helga suggests that Eva celebrate Seder with other Jewish people in Manchester, but Eva is unable to remember when Passover is. She is worried that Lil will think it is silly. Lil tells Evelyn to let her into the storage room, which she does despite initially being reluctant. They discuss the argument and Lil tells Evelyn that she should not lock Faith out. At a train station, Eva and the other children are being evacuated, but she has a panic attack thinking that the Ratcatcher is going to get her. Lil apologises for trying to make Eva leave.

Back in the present day, Evelyn tells Lil that she kept the documents in case someone tried to send her away and she needed them as proof of her right to be in Britain. They begin sorting through the documents and photographs together and Evelyn asks why Lil is so keen for her to get rid of everything, telling her that she blames her for killing a part of her. At the station, Eva waits in vain for her mother and father to arrive. Lil tells her that they must still be in Germany and Eva, believing that she will never see her parents again, takes off her mother's jewellery. Evelyn and Lil destroy all the objects that remind her of her childhood, except for *The Ratcatcher* and the Haggadah, which Evelyn decides to give to a second-hand shop. Lil tells her that she must repair her relationship with Faith. Eva and Lil go to the cinema and before the film begins they see images of soldiers and dead bodies on a newsreel. Eva tells Lil that she wants to sell the jewellery. Evelyn lets Faith into the room and Faith apologises again, but continues to ask her mother about the documents and is clearly angry that she has destroyed them. Evelyn tells her that destroying them helps her. Evelyn tells her what she remembers about her childhood in Germany and her biological parents. Faith asks about Evelyn's mother and father and Evelyn tells her that her father died in Auschwitz. An elderly Helga enters and speaks to Eva in German. Eva tells her that she doesn't understand and they speak in English. Eva tells her that she has changed her name and that Lil and her husband have adopted her. Helga tells her that she wants her to move to New York to live with her and some remaining family members.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

dismissive refusing to consider someone or something seriously
hallucinating seeing or hearing things that are not really there
goose-steps a military marching style where knees are not bent and legs are swung high
Haggadah the text which is recited at the Seder
Seder a Jewish ritual performed by a community (or by multiple generations of a family), involving a recital of the story of the Israelites' liberation from slavery in ancient Egypt; the ritual takes place on the first night (or first two nights) of Passover
Passover the major Jewish spring festival that commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery
second-hand shop a store selling items that have had previous owners
newsreel a short film of news that was shown in cinemas in the past

ACT 2, SCENE 2

Evelyn and Faith look through boxes once more, as they gather things for Faith's new home. Faith asks Evelyn when Helga died and whether Lil knew that she had survived. Evelyn tells her that she did not tell Lil because she would have made her leave with Helga. Faith is annoyed that Evelyn stopped her from meeting her biological grandmother. Evelyn tells Faith that the past is gone, but Faith is pleased to know more about their biological German family and background. Faith gratefully accepts Evelyn's offer of *The Ratcatcher*, the Haggadah and her mouth organ.

In another reliving of Evelyn's memory, a teenage Eva accompanies Helga to the docks, where she will board a boat for New York. Helga tries to convince Eva to come with her, saying that they 'must be together' because they are mother and daughter. Evelyn imagines speaking to her biological mother. She tells Helga that she wishes she had died and that she was the Ratcatcher the whole time. Helga responds that she wishes that Eva had lived. They argue and Evelyn expresses her anger at Helga for abandoning her and then returning to make her feel guilty for surviving without her. Faith returns to the storage room and asks what she can do to comfort her mother, to which Evelyn replies that she can 'Stay my little girl forever'. Despite Evelyn initially asking her not to, Faith takes the box of her toys. The shadow of the Ratcatcher covers the stage.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

The jumps between different timeframes in *Kindertransport* can be quite confusing. Think about why Samuels might have chosen to write the play in this way. What does this communicate about the nature of time and memory?

CHARACTERS

HINT

Have very clearly in your mind the various connections between the different characters and how they all fit together in time. This will help you to be clear and in command of the play during the exam.

EVELYN

- 'English middle-class woman. In her fifties.'
- the grown-up Eva
- Helga's biological daughter
- Lil's adopted daughter
- Faith's mother
- obsessively clean
- emotionally fragile; she suffers panic attacks and fears being forced to leave her home; she tries to avoid conflict
- in denial about the past
- angry at Helga for sending her away
- blames Lil for making her forget her German and Jewish heritage
- separated or divorced from Faith's father

FAITH

- 'Evelyn's only child. In her early twenties.'
- blames herself for her mother's unhappiness
- worried about her mother
- looks for more information about her family history
- upset by her difficult relationship with her mother
- frustrated by her mother's unwillingness to communicate
- indecisive; she commits to moving out and later changes her mind

EVA

- 'Evelyn's younger self. She starts the play at nine years old and finishes it at seventeen years old. German Jewish becoming increasingly English.'
- upset to have left Germany without her parents
- afraid of being alone
- afraid that she will never see her parents again
- dependent on adults
- reluctant to become independent

GENERAL VOCABULARY

unapologetic not feeling or saying you are sorry for something you have done, especially when other people would expect you to feel or say sorry

mediator a person or organisation that tries to end a quarrel between two people, groups or countries by discussion

HELGA

- 'German Jewish woman of the late 1930s. In her early thirties. Eva/ Evelyn's mother.'
- tries to teach Eva to be independent
- only seen in Evelyn's memory
- seemingly **unapologetic** for sending Eva away
- angry at Evelyn for forgetting her past

LIL

- 'Eva/Evelyn's English foster mother. In her eighties.'
- kind
- protective of Evelyn
- unapologetic for not making Evelyn/Eva keep up with her Jewish or German traditions
- angered by lying
- the **mediator** between Faith and Evelyn

ACTIVITY 1 **A01** **A02** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Using strips of paper, write all the major events from the play on each strip. For example, 'Evelyn fights with Faith, leading Eva to lock herself in the storage room.' Working with a partner, one person arranges the strips in the order in which they occur in the play and the other person arranges them in the order in which they occur in real time. What difference would it make if the play looked like the second list rather than the first? How would it change your view of the characters?

THEMES

MOTHER/DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS

'I am your mother. I love you. We must be together.'
(Helga, to Evelyn, Act 2, Scene 2.)
'How could I possibly not be a bad child with such a terrible mother!'
(Faith, to Evelyn, Act 1, Scene 2.)

KEY POINT

Notice the extent to which this is a female play. What Samuels leaves out is in this sense as important as what she puts in – the lack of male characters is as important as the presence of the strong female figures.

From the very first action in the play, the audience is drawn into a world dominated by female relationships and specifically relationships between mothers and daughters. Samuels explores the relationships between Helga and Eva, Lil and Eva (and later Lil and Evelyn), Evelyn and Faith, and Helga and Evelyn. The audience are invited to compare the behaviour of the individual women in their roles as mothers and daughters. Evelyn, the main character, is both a daughter and a mother and Samuels shows how the decisions of her biological mother and adoptive mother impact on her personality and her ability as a carer to her own daughter.

▶ **What is the effect of having one actor play all the male roles, for example, the Ratcatcher?**

IDENTITY

> 'Know your number. If you don't know it, you might forget who you are.'
> (Nazi Border Officer, Act 1, Scene 1)

Much of the conflict in Faith and Evelyn's relationship comes from the fact that Faith feels that she does not know 'who' her mother is because Evelyn is so closed off and unwilling to communicate. When Faith discovers Eva's possessions, her assumption is that Eva is someone other than her mother. She literally does not know who Eva is (or was). By extension, Faith does not know who she is herself, but when her mother finally opens up about her past and her biological parents, Faith feels that she 'has a background, a context.'

Eva's first interaction in England distorts her identity, when the English Organiser cannot pronounce her name. Later, Eva literally changes her various parts of her identity: her name, nationality, language and even her religion.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

How is the audience supposed to view the connection between Eva and Evelyn? Should they be seen as two separate people or as one individual? What implications does your answer have for the play as a whole?

KEY POINT

Many of the major themes of *Kindertransport* are connected to psychological problems caused by the events of the past. This includes the problems that appear in relationships between mothers and daughters, the breakdown of individual identity, the issue of guilt and the problem of memory and escaping the past.

GUILT

> 'I've always thought it was my fault that you were so unhappy.'
> (Faith, to Evelyn, Act 1, Scene 2)

Faith tells Evelyn that she had previously blamed herself for her mother's unhappiness, but her guilt is lifted when she discovers her mother's background. Both Evelyn and Faith place blame on their mothers, Faith telling Evelyn that she 'could kill [her]' for keeping their family's past secret from her and Evelyn telling Helga that she was cruel and wrong to send her away. While Faith is able to apologise soon afterwards, Evelyn's argument with Helga, as far as the audience knows, remains unresolved. Helga never appears to apologise for sending Evelyn away, but everything the audience knows about her is seen from Evelyn's perspective. It is likely that she would have felt conflicted about sending her daughter away and uncertain whether or not it was the right thing to do.

The audience learns in Act 1, Scene 1, that the Ratcatcher only punishes ungrateful children. The fact that Evelyn has a lifelong fear of him, as well as reliving childhood memories and a bitter goodbye to her biological mother, appears to be an expression of her guilt, knowing that she is guilty of ingratitude when she understands the pain and fear of being separated from her own daughter.

▶ In *Kindertransport*, how far do you think an individual's identity is decided by their external environment, such as family, Jewish culture and the Second World War, and how much is decided by their inner personalities?

TIME AND MEMORY

Memory and the nature of time are other major themes in *Kindertransport*. This is largely communicated through the play's structure, which jumps between past and present and allows events from different time periods to occur on stage simultaneously. This highlights the importance of memory, and the idea that events from the past do not disappear as time moves forward, but rather continue to influence in the present. It suggests a non-linear idea of time, in which present and past are mixed up together. This might also be linked to the psychological idea of trauma, which claims that difficult and traumatic events in the past stay in the mind even as time moves forward. The problems which the present-day characters Evelyn and Faith have are shown to be closely tied up with their failure to escape traumatic events of their family's past.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

trauma the effect through which an event damages a person's mind so that they cannot move past it and it continues to have psychological effects on them even after the event itself is over

▲ The Kindertransport statue at Liverpool Street train station in London

DID YOU KNOW?

Kindertransport won some prestigious drama awards when it was first produced, including the Meyer Whitworth Award. For a playwright's first major work, it was therefore extremely successful.

GENRE

The play includes elements of different genres but, as it is principally concerned with family relationships, it is a family drama. Samuels also uses elements of war-time drama, in the setting and themes of Evelyn's memories; the importance of the theme of memory and Evelyn's psychological struggle means it can also be seen as a psychological drama.

STRUCTURE

While the play is written in a traditional two-act structure, where each act contains two scenes, the action jumps between outer reality and Evelyn's inner reality within the same scene. Samuels also uses a story within a play device, firstly with *The Ratcatcher*, and later as Helga tells stories of her Jewish heritage. It is important to remember that Faith's discovery that her mother and Eva are the same person would be a highly dramatic moment for an audience as, unlike readers of the play, they will not have that information before the performance.

STAGECRAFT AND SETTING

OTHER MEDIA

- In the year 2000, the Oscar for best documentary film was won by *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*. Watch this film and compare its representation of the kindertransport to the representation in Samuels's play.

EVOCATIONS

While the audience may assume that the action that takes place in the 1930s and 1940s is in the form of flashbacks, it is important to note that Samuels makes an important distinction that informs readers of the play that this is not the case. The opening stage directions state that the play is set in 'recent times', so they cannot be flashbacks. Samuels has explained that they are 'evocations of Evelyn's repressed psyche'. They are, essentially, living memories that Evelyn experiences, although she has tried to forget, and are a theatrical device to show her inner life. Because they are memories, and are therefore filtered through Evelyn's perspective, they may not be completely accurate. An example of this is the fragmented description of Eva's journey from Germany to Britain.

▶ **How is Evelyn's status in the play changed by the fact that so much of the action takes place in her mind? Does this make her the most important character?**

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

flashbacks when the narrator of a story jumps out of the present in order to describe an event which happened in the past; often flashbacks are in the form of the memories of characters in the present

GENERAL VOCABULARY

evocations when the past is remembered in a way that brings the experience alive again in the present

fragmented broken into a lot of small separate parts

repressed bottled-up or suppressed; repressed feelings or mmories are ones which you do not allow yourself to express or think about

motivation the reasons why a person does something

empathise be able to understand someone else's feelings, problems etc, especially because you have had similar experiences

SETTING

The entire play is set in the spare storage room of Evelyn's suburban London home. The setting is vital in establishing the themes of memory and repressed memory as the storage room is full of objects from the past hidden in boxes. It is also used to create tension; as Faith searches through the boxes the audience wonder what she is likely to find. Even after the discovery of her mother's secret past, the crates and boxes may still hide other secrets. Both the reality of the play and Evelyn's living memories occupy the same space without being aware of each other, raising questions and slowly feeding the audience answers as the play proceeds.

The setting is also important in communicating the historical and literary context of the play. When the audience first see Helga and Eva, it appears that they are hiding in an attic. This image is highly evocative of the Second World War, partly because it has been frequently used in literature of and about the period. *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank is a notable example.

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, EXECUTIVE FUNCTION, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS, NEGOTIATION

▼ CONSIDERING THE CHARACTERS

What is each character's motivation? Write a short paragraph for each of the major characters explaining their motivations. Compare and discuss your paragraph with a partner. Do you agree? Are there any differences? Do their motivations change throughout the play, or even from scene to scene?

LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

KEY POINT

In this play, character is revealed not only through the words the actors speak, but also through the structure, settings and relationships in which Samuels places the characters.

GERMAN

Samuels uses German to make the audience empathise with Eva. At the beginning of the play, Helga and Eva communicate in English in spite of the fact they are German. It is not until Eva arrives in England and is struggling to communicate with the English Organiser, that the audience knows for certain that she is German. Soon after this, the audience see her struggle to speak with Lil. The audience empathises and sympathises with Eva as, shortly before, the audience have seen her acting like an ordinary child, excited by cakes and sweets and bored by her mother's sewing lesson. In Act 2 when

Evelyn and Helga speak, it is once more in English, only now Helga makes grammatical and syntactical errors. Samuels uses language both to show that characters are outsiders and to highlight emotional distance between them when they struggle to understand each other both literally and figuratively.

JUXTAPOSITION

The literary device of juxtaposition is used by the playwright in a number of different forms. Samuels frequently invites the audience to compare and contrast her characters. One method of doing this is by placing characters in similar situations. An example of this is the two different reactions to the coming outbreak of war. Helga feels it is best for Eva to leave Germany without her or Eva's father. When it becomes clear that Manchester is under threat of bombing, Lil also plans to send Eva away. However, when she sees the emotional impact on Eva, she decides to allow her to stay. Samuels also places memory alongside present-day action on stage, allowing the audience to compare the differences between the daughter characters, Eva and Faith, and also the difference between Eva the German child and Evelyn the English adult.

KEY POINT

It will demonstrate a good understanding of the play if you can identify those sections that would be spoken in German, even where the playwright has translated them into English, and incorporate that knowledge into your exam answer.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

juxtaposition putting two things close together in order to encourage comparison between them

PERSONIFICATION

The Ratcatcher begins as a character in a book who punishes ungrateful children. In Act 1, Eva is even eager to hear the story. Later, the Ratcatcher appears only at moments of high stress for Eva: as she departs Germany, when Lil tries to send her away and when Faith uncovers her true identity and they argue. The character comes to personify fear for Evelyn, literally overshadowing both her life and memories as explained in the stage directions.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

overshadowing making an occasion or period of time less enjoyable by making people feel sad or worried

ACTIVITY 3 **A01** **SKILLS** PROBLEM SOLVING, REASONING, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

There are numerous different levels of reality in the play: the present-day reality of Evelyn and Faith, Evelyn's remembered realities of herself as Eva and the fictions that are contained in the books that the characters read such as *The Ratcatcher*. Can you think of any other realities contained within the play?

As with Activity 1, write down the major events of the play on strips of paper and place each one into one of these categories. Do you think there is a hierarchy in which some of these events are seen as being more 'real' or accurate than others, or not?

▶ **What is the relevance of *The Ratcatcher* and the Haggadah, the two books featured in the play? Why does Samuels choose to include these elements?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your response.

1 Discuss the importance of relationships between mothers and daughters in the play. You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

2 How is past presented as important in *Kindertransport*? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

3 'You have to be able to manage on your own' (Helga to Eva). Explore Samuels's presentation of independence in *Kindertransport*. You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

4 'Whatever it is that you think you have discovered. You must forget it.' (Evelyn to Faith).
Write an essay on the presentation of secrets in *Kindertransport*. You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 How is identity explored in the play? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 Identity is a central feature of Kindertransport with Evelyn caught between cultures and literal identities with her previous identity shown as Eva[1]. In showing this conflict and confusion through separate characters,[2] Samuels is able to show the difficulties faced by many young Jewish children during the war. By describing Eva as 'German Jewish becoming increasingly English', then as she grows older, describing Evelyn as a 'English middle-class woman' shows the development of the character's identity split across two people to emphasise this change to the audience – something that would be difficult to show in a book rather than a play[3]. Evelyn is shown to be in denial about her past but by having the young character in the play, Samuel shows that an old identity cannot be forgotten[4].

[1] This opening sentence shows a focus on the question and a good understanding of the text's main ideas.

[2] AO2: This shows a good understanding of narrative structure.

[3] AO2: Shows a good awareness of form and the effect on the audience.

[4] AO2: Could you think of key quotations from young Eva to explore this idea further?

FURTHER READING

If you choose to read any of these works, you should compare and contrast them with the piece you have studied and how they add to your understanding of it. You should think about language, style, format, themes, plot, characters and context.

- *The Devil's Arithmetic* (1988) by Jane Yolen
- *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2008) by John Boyne
- *Three Sisters on Hope Street* (2008) by Diane Samuels

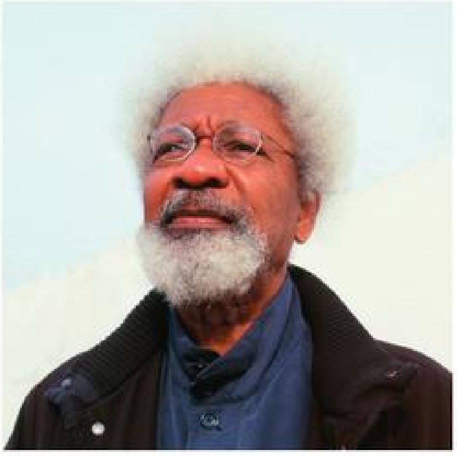
DEATH AND THE KING'S HORSEMAN
WOLE SOYINKA

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Wole Soyinka is a Nigerian writer, academic and political activist born in 1934. His work includes plays, poetry and essays and is often concerned with the duties of political or religious leaders and criticism of colonialism. This has led to him becoming an influential figure in Africa. In 1986, he became the first African writer to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. His parents were Christian, although many relatives followed traditional Yoruba beliefs, and much of his writing has explored his Yoruba-influenced world view. Since 2007, he has been Professor in Residence at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California, USA.

Death and the King's Horseman is based on a real event that took place in 1945. Oba Siyenbola Oladigbolu, the Alafin of the Nigerian city of Oyo, died after a long time in power. His horseman, Olokun Esin Jinadu, was arrested by a British colonial officer in order to prevent his ritual suicide. Murana, Esin's eldest son, committed suicide in his father's place in order to complete the requirements of the ritual. The German writer and editor Ulli Beier told Soyinka the story in 1960, but it was not until 1974 that Soyinka, while in political exile and working as an academic at the University of Cambridge in England, wrote the play. He has said that he was inspired to write the play when walking past a statue of Winston Churchill. This is probably connected to the fact that Churchill is an important symbol of Britishness and of the British Empire. It was first staged in December 1975 in Nigeria, in a production that Soyinka directed himself, and remains his most famous play. It has been performed around the world, including in Nigeria, the United Kingdom and the USA. *Iku Olokun Esin*, a Yoruba translation of the play, was published in 1994.

In an author's note accompanying the published script, Soyinka states that the play should not be seen simply as a 'clash of cultures' and directors should not attempt to portray Pilkings, the British District Officer, as 'a victim of a cruel dilemma'. Soyinka states that he wants interpretation of the play to focus more on the themes of death and the cycle of life than on the politics of colonialism.



▲ Wole Soyinka

GENERAL VOCABULARY

colonialism when one country conquers and exploits another; often primarily associated with the British Empire
Yoruba people from South West Nigeria, also called the Kwa; Yoruba is an official language of Nigeria
Alafin the King, or political leader, of the Yoruba people
ritual suicide the intentional killing of oneself as part of a religious or cultural practice

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbol in literature, people, objects or events that have a meaning other than their literal meaning

DID YOU KNOW?

Soyinka was directly involved in Nigeria's struggle for independence from British rule. During Nigeria's civil war between 1967 and 1970 he was held as a prisoner for almost two years.

KEY POINT

Although it is widely published in English and Soyinka has spent much of his life in Western countries, *Death and the King's Horseman* is deeply steeped in the culture of the Yoruba people.

ACTIVITY 1

A04

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS, NEGOTIATION

▼ THE TEXT IN CONTEXT

The author's note that accompanies the play suggests that it should not be interpreted as a political statement on colonialism, but as a work about life and death. Working with a partner, one person lists all of the reasons they can think of in favour of Soyinka's statement and the other person lists all the reasons against it, based on evidence that you can find in the play. Compare your lists, considering which set of reasons seems the more convincing of the two.

▼ THE PLAY IS ABOUT COLONIAL POLITICS	▼ THE PLAY IS ABOUT NON-POLITICAL THEMES, SUCH AS DEATH
It is the intervention of a British colonialist, Simon Pilkings, that initially prevents the suicide ritual from taking place.	Olunde commits suicide as part of the ritual despite the fact that he has been educated in Europe, suggesting that his contact with the colonial power is less important than his native culture.

PLOT

GENERAL VOCABULARY

deceased	someone who has died, especially recently
realm	a place ruled by a particular person or figure
Egungun	ceremonial masks and costumes used by the Yoruba people
sergeant	a low rank in the army, air force or police, or someone who has this rank
clash	a situation in which very different beliefs and opinions are put against each other, often causing disagreement
disown	say that you no longer want to be connected with someone or something, especially a member of your family

SCENE 1

The play begins in the market place in the ancient Yoruba city of Oyo, Nigeria, in 1944. Elesin, the horseman of the recently **deceased** king, must carry out a ritual suicide in order to accompany the dead king to the **realm** of the ancestors. This duty is fundamental to the stability of the Yoruba world. As Elesin sings and dances through the market, the Praise-Singer questions Elesin's courage and Elesin tells the story of the 'Not-I bird' to assure his friend that he is not afraid of death. Iyaloja, the 'mother of the market', questions his firm decision to leave the earthly world behind and warns him not to be distracted from his duty. Elesin pretends to be offended and demands that the market women honour him by dressing him in the finest cloth. He becomes distracted when he sees a beautiful young woman and states that he wants to make her pregnant, as his new bride, in his final act in the world of the living. Iyaloja is initially reluctant because the girl is due to marry her son, but she decides that Elesin's sacrifice in service of his community is so great that he should be granted anything he desires.

SCENE 2

The British District Officer, Simon Pilkings, and his wife, Jane, are dancing a tango in their bungalow while dressed in traditional Yoruba **Egungun** costumes. Pilkings's African **sergeant**, Amusa, enters to warn him of Elesin's intended suicide, but becomes speechless by the disrespect that the Pilkings are showing by wearing sacred Yoruba robes. He writes a message and leaves. Pilkings is irritated by both Amusa's behaviour and the possibility that preventing Elesin's suicide will **clash** with the European Club's ball, at which the Prince of Wales will be guest of honour. He and Jane discuss previous clashes with Elesin and how they helped his eldest son, Olunde, to move to England to study medicine, causing Elesin to **disown** Olunde as he will be unable to inherit his father's position as Yoruba tradition states. Pilkings, with Jane's insistence, sends a note to Amusa telling him to arrest Elesin and imprison him in the Pilkings's house. The drums that have been playing throughout the scene are unfamiliar to them and they ask their house servant, Joseph, about their meaning. Joseph is African, but has converted to Christianity. Like Amusa, he is shocked and offended by his boss's insensitivity towards other people's beliefs. He tells them that he, too, is confused by the drums, as they seem to signify both the death and wedding of a nobleman.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

eunuch	a man whose testicles have been removed
trance	a state in which you are thinking about something so much that you do not notice what is happening around you
fancy dress ball	a party where people dress up in funny or unusual costumes
dirge	music played or sung at a funeral
burden	a heavy item that is being carried, or something difficult or worrying that you are responsible for

SCENE 3

Amusa arrives in the marketplace to arrest Elesin, but is prevented from doing so by the market women and their daughters. He insists that he is on official business, but the women insist that Elesin is simply celebrating his wedding and must not be interrupted. The girls make fun of Amusa's superficial British manners, calling him 'a white man's **eunuch**' and threaten to remove his clothes if he does not leave. He and his officers run away. Elesin enters with a bloodied rag as a trophy proving that he has taken his new wife's virginity. He declares that he wishes to complete the ritual suicide in the marketplace, as it is his favourite place on earth and a symbol of life itself. With the Praise-Singer's chant to assist him, he enters a **trance** to begin the ritual and becomes unaware of the world around him.

▲ An Egungun masquerade costume

SCENE 4

The **fancy dress ball** takes place at the British Residency. As the Prince of Wales enters, the musicians play a bad version of *Rule Britannia*. With the exception of the Jane and Simon Pilkings, who remain in their Egungun costumes, the guests are dressed in seventeenth-century European costume and try to attract the Prince's attention. Amusa arrives and, still unable to look at Pilkings, informs him of his failure to arrest Elesin. Pilkings, fearing potential embarrassment during the Prince's visit, rushes to arrest Elesin. Olunde arrives and speaks to Jane about the differences between European and African ways of thinking. Olunde is especially critical of the way that European people call things by names that do not reflect their true nature. Jane is shocked by Olunde's opinion of European culture, his view of suicide and, in particular, his uncaring acceptance of his father's suicide. Olunde explains that as soon as he heard of the King's death, he knew that his father would have to commit suicide, but that he is not upset because it is an honourable death as it is in duty of his people. The drumming stops and Olunde believes that this signifies that his father has completed the ritual, but Elesin enters under Pilkings's care. Upon coming face to face with his father, Olunde disowns him, saying, 'I have no father, eater of left-overs.'

SCENE 5

Elesin is chained and imprisoned in a small jail that was previously used to hold slaves before they were transported from Africa. His wife silently sits outside. When Pilkings enters and tries to comfort him, Elesin blames the officer for causing him to fail in his duty. He tries to blame his new wife and the gods, before accepting that it was a failure of his own will because he was too attached to earthly pleasures and he is deeply ashamed. Pilkings and Jane discuss whether or not they should allow Iyaloja to visit Elesin, after receiving a message from Olunde. Pilkings fears that she will somehow assist him in completing the suicide, but allows her to speak to Elesin, as long as she does not get too close to him. Iyaloja angrily criticises Elesin, telling him that he has failed his people and left his King to find his own way to the realm of the ancestors. The Praise-Singer grieves for his friend, questioning why he was too proud to accept his offer of help. Iyaloja informs the women, who sing a Yoruba **dirge**, to enter with their '**burden**', which they place on the ground. Iyaloja reveals Olunde's dead body, explaining that he has taken his father's place to complete the ritual, although they cannot know for sure whether his sacrifice will be enough to restore balance to the world. Elesin violently strangles himself with his chains. Pilkings enters and tries in vain to bring him back to life. When he goes to close Elesin's eyes, Iyaloja screams at him, telling him that it is the duty of the bride. She drops earth on his eyelids and Iyaloja explains that they must now forget the dead and place their hope in her and Elesin's unborn child. Iyaloja and the bride leave, as the women loudly sing their dirge.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

Several aspects of the Yoruba culture might seem cruel or unfair to a reader, for example, forcing people to commit suicide. Does this fact complicate the way you read the play? Does it make it harder to sympathise with Yoruba society and to see Simon Pilkings as only a villain?

CHARACTERS

GENERAL VOCABULARY

strangles kill someone by pressing their throat with hands, a rope or similar

charismatic having a natural ability to attract and interest other people and make them admire you

hedonistic believing that pleasure is the most important thing in life

brash behaving too confidently and speaking too loudly – a word used to show disapproval

ELESIN

- 'Horseman of the King'
- powerful
- charismatic
- intelligent
- proud: he rejects the offer of his Praise-Singer's help to perform his duty
- over-confident in his ability to perform an exceptionally difficult task
- hedonistic: both Iyaloja and the Praise-Singer warn him not to allow his weakness for women to distract him from his duty
- brash: he does not pay attention to the advice or warnings of others
- weak-willed; he is unable to turn down the opportunity to sleep with a beautiful woman
- disrespectful: he is rude to Pilkings
- irresponsible: he is, at first, unwilling to accept responsibility for his failure to perform his duties and attempts to shift blame to both his new bride and Pilkings

SIMON PILKINGS

- the British District Officer
- narrow-minded: he does not try to understand Yoruba culture, believing British law is all that is important
- shallow: he is more concerned with attending the ball than Elesin's suicide
- disrespectful of other's views and religions
- ignorant: he is unable to understand how his actions may affect others
- brash: he does not pay attention to the advice or warnings of his wife
- the play's central representation of British colonialism

JANE PILKINGS

- Simon Pilkings's wife
- ignorant about Yoruba culture, although not to the same extent as her husband
- comparatively **sympathetic**, relative to her husband: she is willing to listen to Olunde's thoughts and opinions, although she does not seem to understand his point of view
- **imperceptive**: she is willing to listen to Olunde, but she is dismissive of his point of view and does not learn anything from him

IYALOJA

- '"Mother" of the market'
- powerful: Elesin must ask her permission to take a new bride and the market women obey her
- fearful of offending Elesin
- intelligent
- perceptive: she is aware of Elesin's weaknesses and warns him not to be distracted by earthly pleasure
- angry that Elesin has been shown such honour, but then betrayed his people by failing to perform his duty

OLUNDE

- Elesin's eldest son
- studying in England to become a doctor
- critical of the European lack of respect for other cultures
- articulate: he is able to express his thoughts on various complex subjects
- intelligent: he is able to understand both Yoruba and European culture
- willing to sacrifice himself for his people
- disappointed by his father's failure

PRAISE-SINGER

- responsible for literally singing Elesin's praises: he accompanies Elesin everywhere and tells stories of his greatness
- a talented speaker
- loyal: he states that he would follow Elesin in committing suicide if he would allow it
- upset that his friend is not the great man that he thought he was

HINT

Soyinka is careful to avoid easy moral categories in which either the characters or the two cultures that he represents appear as straightforwardly good or bad. You should recognise this in your exam answer, and avoid the trap of saying that any of the characters are completely sympathetic or completely evil.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sympathetic applied to a character in fiction, this means a character who is liked by the reader or other characters

GENERAL VOCABULARY

imperceptive lacking perception or deep understanding

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

comic relief an element of humour that is introduced into an otherwise dark and serious work of literature

AMUSA

- a policeman for the British colonialists
- not taken seriously by either the Yoruba or the British
- conflicted: while he respects British rule and obeys Pilkings, he is also fearful of the Yoruba Egungun
- the source of comic relief

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **A04** SKILLS REASONING, INTERPRETATION, CREATIVITY

▼ CONSIDERING THE CHARACTERS

In the author's note that accompanies the published play script, Soyinka states that Simon Pilkings should not be portrayed sympathetically. Discuss the following points with a partner.

- Why is this issue important enough to Soyinka that he made an explicit note about it? Was he worried that people might view Pilkings sympathetically?
- How would the meaning of the play be changed by a sympathetic portrayal of Pilkings?
- Write a series of bullet points describing Elesin, the suicide ritual, and the other Yoruba characters from Pilkings's perspective.

THEMES

DUTY

> 'I'm sorry but we all see our duty differently.'
> (Pilkings to Elesin, Scene 5)

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

catalytic incident an event that is important for what it causes or the issues it raises, rather than being significant in itself

GENERAL VOCABULARY

gulf a deep gap

arbitrary decided or arranged without any reason or plan, often unfairly

While Soyinka states that British intervention is merely 'catalytic incident', rather than being the cause of Elesin's failure, it is Elesin and Pilkings's competing duties and notions of duty that form the driving conflict of the play. Elesin's duty is to wilfully commit suicide in order to lead his king across the 'transitional gulf' to the realm of their ancestors; the fate of his people rests on his success. Pilkings's duty is presented as being more arbitrary; he must enforce British law by stopping Elesin committing suicide, but the ball is of greater importance to him. This conflict is representative of the wider implications of colonialism, not in its clash of cultures, but in the incompatibility of British, and by extension European, laws, with African values.

Both characters fail to perform their duty; Pilkings cannot prevent Elesin's suicide, while Elesin is unable to perform his suicide during the ritual.

DEATH AND SACRIFICE

> 'Is that worse than mass suicide? Mrs Pilkings, what do you call what those young men sent to do by their generals in this war? Of course you have also mastered the art of calling things by names that don't remotely descrie them.'
> (Olunde, Scene 4)

> 'Life should never be thrown away deliberately.'
> (Jane to Olunde, Scene 4)

The play's conflict is fueled by the two cultures' differing views on death and suicide. This theme is introduced in Scene 1, where the audience learns of Elesin's duty to kill himself, and that the reason he must do so is because of the death of his king. In Scene 4, Soyinka explores the theme through Olunde and Jane's conversation. Olunde represents the Yoruba view of self-sacrifice, stating that it is honourable for a leader to sacrifice himself for his people, while Jane states firmly that suicide is always wrong. Like their inability to understand the significance of the Egungun masks, Jane and Pilkings are unable to understand the Yoruba perspective on death and suicide.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

Does every society have a moral duty to try to prevent suicide or is this just an assumption of Western culture?

KEY POINT

Much of this play is about various kinds of duty: duty to society, to family, to one's country and the failure of individuals to fulfil those duties because of their personal weaknesses.

CORRUPTION

> 'Elesin, even at the narrow end of the passage I know you will look back and sigh a last regret for the flesh that flashed past your spirit in flight. You always had a restless eye.'
> (Iyaloja, Scene 1)

Although he initially tries to blame others for his failure to perform his duty, Elesin does eventually admit that it was caused by 'the weight of longing on [his] earth-held limbs'. His will is corrupted by lust for earthly pleasures and possessions and by the honour he has been shown by his people. He becomes overly confident that he is a remarkable individual and does not need the help of others, such as the Praise-Singer. Because of the tragic ending to the play, this can be read as a warning to political leaders that there may be significant consequences if they allow themselves to be corrupted. On the British side, Pilkings is also clearly as corrupted as Elesin, having been turned away from any sense of duty by the attraction of parties, fancy clothes and grand company.

▶ **Who is more at fault: Elesin for failing to fulfil the suicide ritual, or the society which imposes an unjust ritual on him?**

HINT

In your exam answer you should not state that the play is clearly about colonialism, as Soyinka rules out this interpretation. However, you can talk about the ways in which colonialism is still an important theme, even if Soyinka does not want it to be the central focus.

COLONIALISM

Although Soyinka uses the author's note to discourage the reader from interpreting the play in terms of colonial history, it should not be ignored that colonialism is still an undeniably important issue in the play. The play is explicitly set in the colonial context of pre-independence Nigeria, reflecting Soyinka's own background in colonial struggle. The incompatibility between different cultures, the attempt to impose British rule on native traditions and the destructiveness that follows from British imperialism are all important themes. Perhaps the key question, therefore, is 'why would Soyinka discourage critics from viewing the play in this way'. Was it perhaps because he thought that this would be too obvious an interpretation? Or that it might exclude other, more interesting, ways of reading the text?

▶ **Find out more about the context of the play by doing some research on the history of British colonialism in Africa after the Second World War.**

STAGECRAFT AND SETTING

▲ The Yoruba market in a National Theatre production of the play

SETTING AND STRUCTURE

While Soyinka insists that the play is not only concerned with a clashing of cultures, his use of structure invites such a comparison. Scenes 1 to 4 alternate between the Yoruba market and British residence, as the audience sees how each culture functions and understand the intentions of the principal characters from each culture, Elesin and Pilkings. By placing them next to each other, Soyinka forces the audience to compare and contrast the two cultures.

GENRE

The play has been described as a political parable that warns leaders against the corruption of power and reminds them of their duty to their community. Elesin's failure is caused by putting his personal desires before the needs of his people. Similarly, Olunde's death can be viewed as being symbolic of the idea that the new African generation must pay for the mistakes of their elders', who failed to defend their own customs in the face of colonialism. While both Elesin and Soyinka himself state that British intervention is not the cause of Elesin's failure, Pilkings's interference is a catalyst for the events that follow.

Death and the King's Horseman has also been called a tragedy and appears to be heavily influenced by both Greek and Shakespearean tragedies. Soyinka includes many conventions of the tragedy genre, such as a flawed hero (Elesin), the fall of a powerful figure (Elesin dies in shame) and outside pressure contributing to the hero's downfall (Pilkings's interference). Like Shakespearean tragedies, it is written in five acts (although Soyinka labels them as 'scenes') and includes a character whose primary function is to provide comic relief (Amusa).

DRAMATIC IRONY

Soyinka uses dramatic irony to engage the audience and create tension. In Scene 1, the audience becomes aware of Elesin's intentions to carry out his suicide, but soon afterwards they see that he is quickly distracted by a beautiful woman. His pride, over-confidence and boasting make the audience doubt his ability to perform his duty. The audience is therefore made aware that Elesin probably will not fulfil the ritual while the characters in the play are not as aware of this.

In the following scene, Pilkings learns of Elesin's intensions and he makes his plan to interrupt the ritual. The audience are aware of the impending clash long before Elesin is aware. This tension is then lifted by the comical interaction between Amusa and the market women and girls, but is built up again in Scene 3, when the ritual begins, and in Scene 4, when Pilkings rushes from the ball to arrest Elesin. Key to the build-up of dramatic irony is the fact that the audience can see the lives of both the Nigerian and the British characters, which the characters themselves cannot.

▶ **Olunde is a character whose life the audience sees relatively little of. In particular, the audience never directly sees his life in Europe. Why does Soyinka make this choice? What difference would it make if there was a scene with Olunde set in Europe?**

DID YOU KNOW?

The historical events that inspired Soyinka to write *Death and the King's Horseman* also inspired another play called *The King is Dead* by the Yoruba dramatist Duro Ladipo.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

parable	a simple story told to teach a lesson, often a moral lesson
symbolic	where a person, object or event is used by a writer to convey a meaning beyond its literal meaning
tragedies	plays that feature a main character whose flaws result in a reversal of fortune and their death, or the deaths of their loved ones
flawed hero	a central character with a weakness that often results in their downfall
dramatic irony	a device, used in novels, plays, poetry and films, where the audience knows something about a situation that the character (or characters) involved does not

GENERAL VOCABULARY

elders	members of a tribe or other social group who are important and respected because they are old
catalyst	something or someone that causes an important change or event to happen

ACTIVITY 3 **A02** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION, COLLABORATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

As you were reading the play, what events could you correctly predict were going to happen by the end? At what moments did you realise these events were going to happen? Write a list and then compare with a partner.

Next, go through the play and pick out any important moments where the audience has important knowledge that the characters lack. Working with your partner, create a list of these moments. Is there any pattern in the kind of knowledge that Soyinka gives to the audience while denying it to his characters?

LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

With the notable exception of Soyinka's infrequent use of Yoruba words, phrases and songs, the vast majority of the play is written in varying forms of English. Soyinka has been criticised for writing in English: while giving his work a greater reach internationally, it limits accessibility in Africa to only those with access to a higher standard of education.

Soyinka's use of different forms of English serves several purposes. While highlighting fundamental cultural differences between the Yoruba and the British, this device allows him to represent the Yoruba language in a way that an English-speaking, and therefore larger, audience can understand.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

metaphor	describing something by comparing it to an image which it resembles, in a way that says the object *is* the image
proverb	a short saying that contains a moral message or seeks to guide behaviour
simile	similar to a metaphor, a description that says that an object is *like* an image rather than it *is* the image
idiom	a popularly-used phrase, often localised, with a meaning that is not explicit from the individual words used

POETIC PROSE

The Yoruba people speak to each other in rich language with frequent use of **metaphors**, **proverbs**, **similes** and **idioms**. Remember that the play is intended to be performed. The long passages that represent the Yoruba language would be difficult for an audience to fully understand, regardless of whether English is their first language, because of the complex vocabulary used. It is easier to see that their language includes numerous references to nature and the various stages of existences (the unborn, the living, the ancestors).

As with dance and the ever-present music of the Yoruba, the English used in the play to represent their own language contains strong rhythm throughout, which is an extension of the theme of balance and order. At certain key moments in the play, such as Elesin's recital of the 'Not-I Bird' story and the Praise-Singer leading Elesin into a trance during the willed-suicide ritual, verse replaces prose. This reflects the importance of these sequences.

▶ **What difference would it make to the play if it was written entirely in Standard English with no Yoruba elements or if it was written entirely in Yoruba rather than English and only accessible to audiences able to speak Yoruba?**

INFORMAL PROSE AND COLLOQUIALISM

The British characters speak in more informal prose, using much shorter sentences with an extensive use of slang. Pilkings, in particular, is rude and disrespectful towards other characters, often showing disregard for their beliefs. Soyinka's comparatively simplistic use of vocabulary and subject matter reflects the lack of depth of these British characters. While the Yoruba discuss religion and the universal laws that they must obey, the British are more concerned with a luxurious ball.

While Olunde speaks using a speech pattern that is similar to the Pilking's, he does not use colloquialisms. His vocabulary is simple, but he shows his intelligence when discussing what he has learned about British culture and trying to explain to Jane the hypocrisy of her attitude towards suicide. When he is unexpectedly reunited with his father, he speaks a single sentence in the poetic prose of the Yoruba.

HINT

Notice the significance of Amusa to the play as a whole. He appears to be a minor character, but serves the vital function of communicating between the British and the Nigerians.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

slang informal language, often associated with a particular social group or class
colloquialism an expression or word used in informal conversation

PIDGIN ENGLISH

The third form of English, Pidgin English, is used by Amusa. He combines the two languages of Yoruba and English, using simple sentences and simplified grammar. This is used for comedic effect and makes him appear foolish. He is mocked by both the market girls and Pilkings, showing that he (and by extension other Africans who abandon their native culture in order to accept European reactions) fits into neither Yoruba nor British society.

KEY POINT

The different types of language that Soyinka uses communicate important things about the characters and about the relationships between the different cultures that the play represents.

ACTIVITY 4 **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, REASONING

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Go through the play identifying as many similes and metaphors as you can and noting down where they occur and which character uses them. Can you spot any patterns? For example, are metaphors and similes used at key dramatic moments or when a character is trying to communicate moral guidance? Do certain characters use metaphors and similes more than others?

GENERAL VOCABULARY

hypocrisy when someone pretends to have certain beliefs or opinions that they do not really have – used to show disapproval
Pidgin English English that is mixed with the words or simplified grammatical structures of another language; often these 'Pidgin' languages have low prestige, being judged as lower in status than other languages

▲ A scene from *Death and the King's Horseman*

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your response.

1 Discuss the importance of rituals in *Death and the King's Horseman*. You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

2 In his author's note, Soyinka states that *Death and the King's Horseman* is not a play about a 'clash of cultures'. Write an essay on whether *Death and the King's Horseman* is about 'a clash of cultures' or not. You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

3 'First I blamed the white man, then I blamed my gods for deserting me. Now I feel I want to blame you for the mystery of the sapping of my will.' (Elesin to his bride, Scene 5).

How is the idea of responsibility presented as important in *Death and the King's Horseman*? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

4 Explore Soyinka's presentation of sacrifice in *Death and the King's Horseman*. You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 What is the role of Olunde in the play? You must consider language, form and structure in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 Olunde has a number of important roles in Death and the King's Horseman as a character caught between his native culture and a more European background[1]. As Elesin's eldest son, he is proud of his Yoruba roots and respects their culture, however, he has studied to be a doctor in England. Simon describes him as 'a most intelligent boy, really bright' but also says that 'The old pagan wanted him to stay and carry on some family tradition or the other. Honestly I couldn't understand the fuss he made'[2]. This shows that despite being an intelligent person capable of being a doctor, his father would have preferred him to stay and carry on the family tradition. It also shows Olunde's role in highlighting the lack of cultural sensitivity shown by the British characters[3] – Simon cannot understand why Elesin wanted his son to stay with him.

[1] AO4: Shows an awareness of context, which is developed throughout the paragraph.

[2] AO2: What could you say about the language in this quotation?

[3] AO4: This comment shows further development of contextual understanding.

OTHER MEDIA

- Soyinka interview (search terms).
- Overview of Yoruba culture and customs (search terms).
- African theatre (search terms).

FURTHER READING

If you choose to read any of the author's other works, you should compare and contrast them with the piece you have studied and how they add to your understanding of it. You should think about language, style, format, themes, plot, characters and context.

- *Opera Wonyosi* (1981) by Wole Soyinka

Assessment Objective 1

Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of prose, poetry and drama texts

Assessment Objective 2

Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects

Assessment Objective 4

Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

LITERARY HERITAGE TEXTS

WHAT IS LITERARY HERITAGE?

The 'heritage' of a place or country can refer to the historical objects and cultural values that are important in a culture or society because they have existed for a long time. In relation to literature, 'literary heritage' can be works of literature that have historically contributed to a culture or society. This leaves the definition open to interpretation. There are however, some areas that can be explored when deciding whether a text is a 'heritage text' or not.

The first area to explore is the idea that works of literary heritage have had a powerful influence on the way in which language is used today, both by current writers and in ordinary conversation. The clearest example of this in English, is Shakespeare. Although written 400 years ago, there are countless phrases from Shakespeare's works that people still use and understand today, even if they do not know where they originate from. Expressions like 'neither a lender nor a borrower be' and 'more sinned against than sinning' are used today in newspapers, shops, schools and houses across the English-speaking world, but they started life in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. Likewise, the poetic rhythm that Shakespeare used, known as iambic pentameter, has been the foundation of poetry in English ever since.

As well as making this contribution to language, heritage texts have also often produced characters and images that have achieved widespread popularity in a similar way. Charles Dickens is another writer often considered part of England's literary heritage and there are many of his characters who are still widely known and recognisable today, even by people who have not read his books. Think of Oliver Twist, Ebenezer Scrooge from *A Christmas Carol* or Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations*. All of these characters have been used countless times in film and TV adaptations (including by shows like *The Simpsons* and *The Muppets*). In general, it is useful to think of literary heritage as being about texts that have made a lasting contribution to a nation's language and cultural life and that remain important and relevant today.

▲ Charles Dickens

HOW TO READ THE TEXTS

Classic works of literature can be rewarding to study, but the language that they use can be challenging. It is important to approach these texts in the right way in order to get the most out of them. Try combining big questions that look at the text as a whole with smaller questions that look at details and specific techniques. If you can link these together, it should form the basis of a strong exam answer.

For example, with *Macbeth*, big questions might be ones that concern the text as a whole. What is the most important theme of *Macbeth*? Is it guilt, ambition or the supernatural? Looking more closely at the details would then involve asking how Shakespeare uses language, form and structure, as well as the details of character and setting, to communicate those big ideas. Try applying this same technique to whichever heritage text you are studying: what are the big thematic ideas and what methods does the writer use to communicate them?

THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE AND CONTEXT

With writers such as Shakespeare, Dickens and Austen, it is important to recognise that the societies in which they wrote were different to modern society. For example, ideas about romantic love are very different today to what they were in the past. In *Romeo and Juliet*, it might seem strange that the love between the two characters is so closely connected to politics and family loyalty. However, this idea about love among powerful families would have been familiar to audiences at the time. Understanding context can therefore be important in explaining aspects of these texts which might at first appear strange to modern readers.

Likewise, it is important to recognise that the language of these texts can often be difficult. Sometimes this is the result of an author's deliberate technique. Hawthorne uses very long and complex sentences in *The Scarlet Letter*, but this is done partly to copy and make fun of the self-important and overly formal puritan attitude. If you can find reasons like this why the author makes the language choices that they make, it can often be helpful in understanding them better. At other times, however, the language is simply difficult because it is old. A thesaurus or a copy of the text that has accompanying notes can be helpful here. Also, if you do not understand a particular word in, it is often possible to make an educated guess based on context. You may not know exactly what is meant, but the context of the sentence should be enough to help you answer an exam question.

TEXT OPTIONS

Romeo and Juliet	William Shakespeare	*Pride and Prejudice*	Jane Austen
Macbeth	William Shakespeare	*Great Expectations*	Charles Dickens
The Merchant of Venice	William Shakespeare	*The Scarlet Letter*	Nathaniel Hawthorne

ROMEO AND JULIET
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon in England and died in 1616. When he was 18, he married Anne Hathaway and some time later moved to London to write and act. There was a famous theatre company at the time called 'The Lord Chamberlain's Men', of which he became one of the leading actors. Shakespeare was writing during the last part of Queen Elizabeth I's reign, at the end of the 16th century, and the early part of the reign of King James I. Both rulers admired his work and The Lord Chamberlain's Men became known as 'The King's Men'.

▲ Shakespeare's house in Stratford-upon-Avon

Shakespeare wrote over 30 plays, most of which are still often performed all over the world today, having been translated into many languages. *Romeo and Juliet*, with its 'young love' interest, is one of the most popular of his plays. The exact date of composition is unknown, but the play is thought to have been written in 1595–6.

SOURCES AND ADAPTATIONS

- Stories of unkind parents, unfortunate lovers and even sleeping potions can be traced back to classical times.
- The immediate inspiration for Shakespeare's play is widely acknowledged to be Arthur Brooke's long poem *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562), the first English version of the story of *Romeo and Juliet*. His poem was very popular among Elizabethan readers.
- The story of the two lovers was known before this and there were French and Italian versions of the story. The Italian versions, written in the 1530s by Luigi da Porta and in the 1550s by Matteo Bandello respectively, told the story of Romeo and Giuletta and the feuding families of Montecchi and Capelletti. More recently, the story has been used in several operas and films, including the very popular Franco Zeffirelli (1968) and Baz Luhrmann (1996) versions, as well as in animated versions. It also was made into the famous musical adaptation *West Side Story*.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

composition the action of producing a creative work, such as a play, poem or piece of music

ACTIVITY 1 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

THE HISTORY OF MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

Each society has different customs of marriage and different expectations surrounding marriage. In the 1600s in England, it was not uncommon for girls as young as twelve years old to be married. Parents were expected to arrange their daughter's marriage. Wealth was an important factor in arranging marriage, and rich suitors were approved of by parents.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

suitors men who want to marry a particular woman

1 What is Lord Capulet's attitude to marriage in the play?
2 How does Juliet disrupt the norms of marriage within society?
3 How do modern ideas of society's roles for women compare or contrast to those of the 1600s?

Copy and complete the following table, finding quotations from the play to support your ideas.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

quotations words from a text

HISTORICAL/SOCIAL CONTEXTUAL POINT	QUOTATION	SIGNIFICANCE
Juliet's attitude towards her mother		
Capulet's attitude towards Juliet		
Juliet's attitude towards the Nurse		
Juliet's comments about fortune		

PLOT

The play centres on the love between Romeo, a Montague, and Juliet, a Capulet, both from the Italian town of Verona. These families have a long-running feud that is shown by the fighting at the very start of the play between the servants of the two families. When Prince Escalus intervenes to try to restore peace, Romeo meets his friend Benvolio and tells him of his feelings for Rosaline (which it seems may be infatuation, rather than real love). However, as it appears she does not return his affections, Benvolio advises him to look for someone else. Meanwhile, the nobleman Paris expresses a wish to marry Juliet, which causes her father to invite many people to a feast, including Paris. Romeo and Benvolio decide to gatecrash the feast in the knowledge that Rosaline will be there. At the feast, Romeo notices Juliet and immediately forgets all about Rosaline. There is a strong instant attraction, and Romeo and Juliet kiss within minutes of seeing each other. Juliet only learns afterwards that Romeo is a Montague.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

feud an angry and often violent quarrel between two people or groups that continues for a long time
intervenes becomes involved in an argument, fight or other difficult situation in order to change what happens
infatuation a strong feeling of love for someone, usually that does not continue for very long
gatecrash go to a party that you have not been invited to

Romeo refuses to leave with his friends and moves quietly and carefully round the garden to call out to Juliet from outside her window and they declare their love to each other. This is the famous 'balcony scene' where Juliet 'stands aloft'. When Romeo leaves, he realises that their new-found love causes

GENERAL VOCABULARY

flee leave somewhere very quickly, in order to escape from danger

scattering throwing or dropping something over a wide area in an irregular way

problems because the family feud makes it seem impossible for them to marry. He visits a priest, Friar Laurence, who agrees to marry them secretly, hoping that this will bring the two families together and put an end to their feud. However, in the marketplace, at the height of the day's heat, Romeo's friend Mercutio is killed by the Capulet Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, who is then killed by Romeo in return. This causes Juliet great pain because of her divided loyalties. After their wedding night, Romeo has to flee, as he knows that if he returns he will himself be killed.

Juliet‘s father is now determined that she should marry Paris, not knowing of her marriage to Romeo. She at first refuses, despite the Nurse's advice, but then agrees because of the plan that she and Friar Laurence have put together. This involves her taking a special potion to put her to sleep so that she appears to be dead; her parents then bury her in the family tomb. However, the message to Romeo from the Friar does not reach him, so he is unaware of the plot. He returns to Verona and visits the tomb. He is therefore convinced that Juliet really is dead.

Romeo sees Paris, who has been scattering flowers in memory of Juliet. He fights and kills Paris; then, seeing the 'dead' body of his love, kills himself with the poison that he has brought with him for the purpose. After his death, Juliet comes out of her deep sleep and finds that Romeo has killed himself. She kisses his lips, hoping the poison will kill her. When it fails to do so, she takes his dagger and stabs herself in the chest, falling on his body and then dying. Their death does, however, achieve one thing: an end to the feud between the two families.

▲ A fight scene from a stage version of *Romeo and Juliet*

CHARACTERS

GENERAL VOCABULARY

witty	using words in a clever and amusing way
wooed	tried to gain the love of a woman, with marriage in mind
headstrong	very determined to do what you want, even when other people advise you not to do it
schemer	a person who secretly makes clever and dishonest plans to get or achieve something

ROMEO

- the son of Lord and Lady Montague
- supposedly romantically in love with Rosaline, although he is really in love with the idea of being in love: he is able to forget her quickly and fall immediately in love with Juliet
- passionately in love with Juliet from the moment he sees her and prepared to die if he cannot have her
- a man of honour and principle, refusing to fight Tybalt
- capable of extreme and violent emotions and reactions, including anger and the desire for revenge
- fond of friends' company, among whom he appears intelligent and capable of enjoying witty exchanges

JULIET

- the daughter of Lord and Lady Capulet
- allowed by her father to be wooed by Paris, although she is not yet fourteen
- someone who matures rapidly from girl to woman over the course of the play
- brave and independent: she is prepared to marry Romeo, despite the family feud and her parents' wishes
- headstrong and confident, as she is happy to kiss Romeo when she hardly knows him and to comment on his kissing
- the first person to suggest marriage: before Romeo
- capable of falling in love very quickly and then of being loyal and committed
- willing to go ahead with a dangerous plan and then to take her own life

FRIAR LAURENCE

- a religious figure who acts out of concern for Romeo
- able to offer Romeo advice because he knows him very well
- someone who seems wise and knowledgeable and is trusted
- brave, as he is prepared to suggest a very risky plan that does not work out well: he could be blamed by some for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet
- a schemer, who has a plan to end the feud between the families, based on the plan that he offers Juliet

GENERAL VOCABULARY

chatter talk quickly in a friendly way without stopping, especially about things that are not serious or important

go-between someone who takes messages from one person or group to another because the two sides cannot meet or do not want to meet

banishment the act of sending someone away permanently from their country or the area where they live, especially as an official punishment

THE NURSE

- like a mother in her protective attitudes towards Juliet
- devoted to the Capulet family, but prepared to take risks to help Juliet
- tends to chatter a lot and is the source of many comical conversations
- prepared to go against her own views in the advice she gives Juliet about marrying Paris
- happy to tease Juliet initially by not telling her information from Romeo

LORD CAPULET

- the father of Juliet
- always prepared to fight against the Montagues; lacking self-control
- an apparently kind and friendly host
- able to prevent a fight between Tybalt and Romeo at his house
- makes the arrangements for Juliet to marry Paris
- angry with Juliet for her disobedience
- regretful about his actions after her death

BENVOLIO

- Romeo's cousin and good friend
- a different kind of young man from Mercutio and Tybalt: he is neutral and fair
- keen to stop the fighting between the families; a peace-maker
- someone who, as his Italian name suggests (translated as 'wishing well' in English), wants the best outcome
- a reliable go-between for the Montagues and Escalus

LADY MONTAGUE

- the mother of Romeo
- so full of grief after Romeo's banishment that she dies

LADY CAPULET

- the mother of Juliet
- a slightly distant figure for Juliet, who is much closer to her Nurse
- in agreement with her husband, rather than with Juliet

LORD MONTAGUE

- the father of Romeo
- head of the Montague family
- the person who reports his wife's death

TYBALT

- the cousin of Juliet
- a very aggressive character: 'fiery Tybalt'
- interested in starting fights with the Montagues
- full of hatred and anger

MERCUTIO

- Romeo's best friend, to whom he is very loyal
- intelligent, quick and clever; a strong character with strong opinions
- someone who likes a joke and likes to make fun of people, including Romeo
- always looking for a fight, which leads to his death

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** REASONING, INTERPRETATION, COLLABORATION

▼ CONSIDERING CHARACTER

You can learn a lot about the different characters by studying a particular scene in detail. A good example of such a scene is the central scene, Act 3, Scene 1, in which Romeo kills Tybalt.

Work with a partner, in a group or by yourself, and consider the following points.

- What happened in the previous scene? Therefore what mood is set for the audience?
- Are there signs that a fight will start?
- Are the fighting and killing are presented as inevitable?
- How does the fight link with the fight at the start of the play?
- How does the audience feels about Romeo at the end of the scene?
- How does the scene sets up the characters for the next scene? How does it relate to the preceding and following scenes?
- How does the end of the scene relate to the earlier fight and the warning from the Prince in Act 1?

THEMES

LOVE

Many plays, including those of Shakespeare, look at different types of love. The audience is introduced to Romeo as someone whose feelings for Rosaline might be called 'puppy love' or infatuation; he is initially shown as completely 'love-struck', but the **superficiality** of his feelings is underlined by the speed with which he abandons them at the sight of Juliet.

The play gives several examples of close friendship as a form of love, particularly the protective love shown by the Nurse to Juliet and the Friar to Romeo; as well as the **laddish** friendships of the young men, which are still instantly recognisable in the street today, and marked by *braggadocio* (a kind of boastful, confident way of walking and behaving). However, such friendship can generate fierce loyalty, to the point of being willing to die for a friend, as happens with Mercutio.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

superficiality the quality of appearing to be true or real, but only on the surface

laddish referring to the behaviour of a young man who likes spending time with other men, drinking alcohol and enjoying things like sport, sex, and music

There is also the view that marriage is, above all, a business contract, in which love is not a very important consideration: Paris wishes to marry Juliet, but admits that he has 'little talked of love'. Even Juliet, when asked how she feels about the idea of marriage to Paris, only says 'I'll look to like', showing that she has little emotional investment in the idea, but will simply try the idea. Capulet says to Juliet: 'I give you to my friend'.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

witticisms clever and amusing remarks

GENERAL VOCABULARY

consummated a marriage or relationship made complete by having sex

jesting saying things that you do not really mean in order to amuse people

Part of the overall treatment of love is the presentation of sexual love. Although, clearly, the marriage of Romeo and Juliet is happily **consummated**, many of the references to sex are not directly linked to their love. Instead they are there to provide an endless source of complicated puns and **witticisms**, particularly for the young men, and in some instances for the Nurse. Such **jesting** treats love in an generally more basic way than the idealism of the central relationship.

The theme of true love is explored mainly through the rapidly developing relationship between Romeo and Juliet. Some cynics think it is all too fast to be true, denying the idea of 'love at first sight' and saying that their instant falling for each other is not based on true appreciation of each other's qualities. Romantics, on the other hand, would value this love born of immediate attraction that rapidly blossoms into a close and unbreakable relationship. The couple will do anything for each other.

▲ A scene from Baz Luhrman's film version of the play

GENERAL VOCABULARY

vendettas long and violent arguments between groups or people, especially about something that happened in the past

VIOLENCE AND DEATH

Like many other plays written around Shakespeare's time, there is a strong atmosphere of violence, connected with hatred, which leads to death after death. Revenge was often associated with families and their feuds or **vendettas**. The death of several characters and the theme of revenge itself occur in other plays by Shakespeare, notably *Hamlet*, and in *Romeo and Juliet* a number of young lives are cut short due to the desire for revenge. Note how Shakespeare uses violence and the end of violence to alter the mood of the play, switching quickly between broad comic scenes and dark, tragic ones.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

prologue the introduction to a play, long poem or novel

sonnet a 14-line poem with a formal structure, consisting of a set pattern of lines; the Shakespearian sonnet contains three quatrains and a couplet (four and two lines respectively); the Petrarchan sonnet contains an octave and a sestet (eight and six lines respectively)

Greek tragedy a highly influential theatrical form from Ancient Greece; plays in this form were often based on myth

FATE

The Prologue of the play, in sonnet form, is striking because it tells the audience what is going to happen and that nothing can change it because it is decided by fate: Romeo and Juliet are described as 'death-marked'; they are a 'pair of star-crossed lovers'. Romeo and Juliet cannot stop the family feuds or the effect that these will have on their own and others' lives.

They themselves are very conscious that their lives may be fated. The idea of fate was an important one in Greek tragedy, which had a strong influence on Shakespeare's thinking. Audiences learn from such plays as Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* that characters cannot avoid their destiny, even if desperate actions are carried out to try to prevent it happening. In *Romeo and Juliet*, it is the failure of the message from Friar Laurence to reach Romeo that leads to Romeo not realising the truth of the situation. But fate means that the tragedy would have occurred no matter what any of the characters do: therefore Romeo and Juliet are the innocent victims of a fate that has already been worked out. Their helplessness in the face of fate is one of many causes of the audience's feelings of sympathy towards the lovers.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

fate a power that is believed to control what happens in people's lives

dispute a serious argument or disagreement

patriarchal ruled or controlled only by men, particularly father figures

quarrel an angry argument or disagreement

FAMILIES

As you have seen, the long-running dispute between two of Verona's leading families, which are both strongly patriarchal, is central to the play. This quarrel is brought into sharp focus by the idea of a marriage that is, in this sense, a union of opposites, no matter how well-matched the young couple may be personally. Inevitably, therefore, the couple's actions will have an effect on their families: the prospect of a marriage with Paris, with his connections to the Prince, was seen by Capulet as so attractive that Juliet's feelings hardly seem to matter. The final union between the families gives the play more of a 'happy ending', even though the deaths of the younger members of the family will continue to haunt the families in the future.

STAGECRAFT AND SETTING

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

dramatic irony a device, used in novels, plays, poetry and films, where the audience knows something about a situation that the character (or characters) involved does not

STAGECRAFT

Shakespeare's use of the Prologue is important because, much more than in any of his other plays, the speaker gives a lot of information about what will come. This permits an element of dramatic irony because the audience is well aware that the love of the young couple will not end happily.

In addition, Shakespeare keeps the action moving quickly and distracts the audience's attention by the frequent changes of scene: there are 24 scenes in total. This often has the effect of altering the mood and atmosphere. One example is when the action cuts from Romeo running for his life after the deaths of Tybalt and Mercutio to the very different scene where, with more dramatic irony, Juliet is waiting for Romeo to arrive, ignorant of these events. Similarly, light relief is provided after scenes of great tension, such as the appearance of the musicians.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

orchard a place where fruit trees are grown

gloom a feeling of great sadness and lack of hope

SETTING

The play is set in Verona and, for the scene in which Romeo flees, in Mantua (Act 5, Scene 1). These two northern Italian cities are not very far apart and it is possible to work out that the action occupies four days: the beginnings and ends of days give important links to the events.

Most of the play takes place outside the house, the orchard of the Capulets being associated with life, hope and blossoming fruitfulness, and the graveyard with its family tombs being a scene of death and gloom. The fight scene at the start takes place in a public setting: on the streets of Verona for all to see. The audience learns that fights between members of the families have taken place in public places before. The scene in which Tybalt confronts Mercutio at the start of Act 3 is also set in one of Verona's public squares, linking it closely with the opening of the play. The action takes place in July and the heat of the weather may be linked to the heat of the characters' passions, whether motivated by anger or desire.

▲ 'Juliet's balcony' in Verona, Italy

GENERAL VOCABULARY

confronts	faces someone in a threatening way, with an attack in mind
plague	a disease that causes death and spreads quickly to a large number of people

TIME LINE

On Sunday, the first day of the play and the week, there is the servants' fight. Romeo and Juliet meet at the feast and declare their love. The hurried and secret marriage takes place on Monday, and on the same day Romeo kills Tybalt and is banished. He does, however, spend his honeymoon night with Juliet. On Tuesday, at dawn, Romeo leaves for Mantua and Juliet is told she is due to marry Paris. Juliet, therefore, makes her plans with Friar Laurence. Capulet then brings forward the wedding to Paris from Thursday to Wednesday. Juliet decides that she must drink the sleeping potion that night.

On Wednesday, the servant Balthasar is supposed to go to Mantua to inform Romeo of Juliet's 'death', but because of an outbreak of plague he cannot get there. Because Romeo does not hear about the plan, he rides immediately to the Capulet' tomb, kills Paris and drinks the poison, after which Juliet also kills herself. Later the same night, the bodies are found by the Friar, the families and Prince Escalus.

▶ **Imagine that *Romeo and Juliet* was set in a different country from Italy. Would this change the feeling of the play?**

LANGUAGE STRUCTURE AND FORM

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

oxymoron	the combination of two ideas that are opposites; this frequently has a surprising or unusual effect
antithesis	the complete opposite of something

DID YOU KNOW?

The language of *Romeo and Juliet* is very much part of today's popular culture. A boy who goes out with lots of girls is often referred to as a 'Romeo'. Shakespeare often made up and used new words and phrases in the play, such as 'on a wild goose chase' or 'fool's paradise', which are still in use today.

OPPOSITES

What do the two phrases 'deafening silence' and 'crazy wisdom' have in common? They are contradictions. You have seen how Shakespeare often puts together opposite ideas: contrasting love and hate is the most obvious example in this play. Sometimes these are combined in a single idea, called an oxymoron, in which words with opposite meanings are placed together, forming a paradox, or contradiction, of apparently opposed ideas.

'Loving hate' is a good example of an oxymoron, as it is in one of the play's most quoted (or misquoted) lines: 'Parting is such sweet sorrow'. Look also at the antithesis in the line, 'More light and light, more dark and dark our woes!' The striking linking contrast is made between the dawn breaking and their troubles breaking: light and dark are important ideas in the play, often linked to life and death.

ACTIVITY 3 A02 SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ EXPLORING SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF LANGUAGE

The character of Romeo is introduced in Act 1 Scene 1. What are your first impressions of him? Re-read his first speech. Highlight all the oxymorons you can find from lines 167 to 185. Copy and complete the table and, using your own examples, analyse the oxymorons you have found, considering what each shows about Romeo's feelings.

▼ OXYMORON	▼ ANALYSIS	▼ WHAT IT SHOWS ABOUT ROMEO'S FEELINGS
'A brawling love'	Brawling – means to fight. Love – means to like intensely, perhaps obsessively. The word 'brawling' suggests a struggle and difficulty and may be connected to the theme of conflict in the play. By using the word 'love' next to 'brawling', Shakespeare shows the audience how love can be difficult and confused.	This oxymoron shows the audience that Romeo is prepared for love to be a challenge, like a brawl, and that his attitude towards love is conflicting and possibly negative.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

pun an amusing use of a word or phrase that has two meanings, or of words that have the same sound but different meanings

iambic using a light, unstressed beat followed by a heavy, stressed one: tee-*tum* (this pair of beats is called an iamb)

pentameter a line of poetry containing five pairs of beats or ten syllables

PUNS

Another technique Shakespeare uses is the pun. When Mercutio is dying he says that tomorrow he will be a 'grave man', 'grave' meaning 'serious', but also meaning 'dead and buried'. Puns can be used like this to make fun of characters and situations, as the audience sees in the language used by the two servants at the start who link everything they do and think about to sex.

SHAKESPEARE'S VERSE

For much of the play, Shakespeare uses a verse rhythm called iambic pentameter.

Note when the characters speak in verse and the difference when they speak in normal speech rhythms in prose, where the pace is often more rapid and the length of lines varies.

Another notable feature is that, in places, complete sonnets are integrated into the play. This use of sonnets is unusual and perhaps Shakespeare chooses it because he sees it as particularly appropriate for a play dealing with love as its central theme.

ACTIVITY 4 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, EXECUTIVE FUNCTION, TEAMWORK, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS, RESPONSIBILITY

▼ THE REDUCED SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

The Reduced Shakespeare Company writes and performs very short, fast-paced and often comic summaries of Shakespeare's plays. To check your understanding of the plot, write a short summary. From this, write the script for a group performance that tells the story of the play in no more than two minutes in length. When you perform you may need to play multiple roles within your group.

- Think about the advice that is offered to Juliet by the Nurse and by Friar Laurence. Who do you think gives better advice and why? Which other characters act as advisers and how successfully do they do this?
- Does love triumph and succeed over hatred in this play?
- Is Juliet a more convincing representative of true love than Romeo? Why do you think this?
- How important are fate and destiny in *Romeo and Juliet*?

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A01 **A02** **A04**

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your response.

1 'What, drawn and talk of peace? I hate the word as I hate hell, all Montagues and thee (Tybalt).
How much does hate drive the action of the play? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

2 How does Shakespeare explore the theme of love in *Romeo and Juliet*? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

3 Compare and contrast the characters of Tybalt and Mercutio. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

4 How are relationships between parents and children presented in *Romeo and Juliet*? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 How does the Prologue influence the rest of the play? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 Shakespeare's decision to give away the ending of Romeo and Juliet during the play's Prologue has a dramatic effect on the rest of the play and the audience.[1] Told in a sonnet form[2], the audience are introduced to the story of the 'star crossed lovers'[3] and quickly learn that there will not be a happy ending.

The main reason for the Prologue is to introduce a sense of dramatic irony[4]. The audience knows that the main characters are going to die, having been given the plot, but this keeps them interested and engaged with the play. The exciting story throughout may make them forget the ending that is to come but it may also affect their view of what is happening in front of them[5].

[1] A02: This opening gives a good overall impression of the effect of the Prologue as a structural device.

[2] A02: This is another relevant comment on form and structure

[3] A02: What could you say about the language in this quotation?

[4] A02: Dramatic irony means that the audience are aware of things that the characters in the play are not.

[5] A01: You need to give an informed personal response. Do you agree with this interpretation?

MACBETH
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Most scholars agree that the British playwright William Shakespeare (1564–1616) wrote at least 36 plays, many of which are widely considered to be among the greatest works of literature in the English language. They are usually divided into four groups: the comedies (including *Much Ado about Nothing*), histories (such as *Henry V*), tragedies (such as *Romeo and Juliet*), and romances (such as *The Tempest*).

His plays have proven to be highly durable – they are still among the most popular plays to be staged in the entire world – and universal – they appeal to many people across the world and can be set in many places, cultures and times rather than being restricted to the Elizabethan era in which they were written.

The Tragedy of Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's most popular plays. It is a tale of ambition, betrayal, murder, guilt and downfall, featuring supernatural elements and exploring the idea of what it means to be a true king. It was written around the same time that Elizabeth I died and was succeeded by James I in 1603. James was also King of Scotland and his rule created a union between Scotland and England. Many think that the play, which is set in Scotland around the year 1000, was written because of this change in rulers. King James was also very religious and famously afraid of witches, who play a large role in the play. He also suffered political troubles, including attempts to kill him.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

comedies the most light-hearted of Shakespeare's plays, these often include cases of mistaken identity and happy endings featuring weddings; unlike modern comedies, they are not defined by the inclusion of humour
histories plays focusing on medieval English rulers and power struggles during their reigns; while the characters are based on real people, the plays are works of fiction
tragedies plays that feature a main character, whose flaws result in a complete change of fortune and their death, or the deaths of their loved ones
romances also referred to as tragicomedies, these plays were written late in Shakespeare's life and career; key features include elements of tragedy, storylines concerning fathers and daughters, the saving of a main character as part of a happy ending, and supernatural elements

GENERAL VOCABULARY

scholars specialists on specific subjects
ambition a strong desire to be successful or achieve something
betrayal breaking the trust or confidence of a person or community (such as a country), often through helping their enemy
supernatural unexplainable by science or the laws or nature
nobleman a male member of aristocracy, such as a prince or knight
descendants younger blood relatives

A NOTE ON CITATIONS

People usually cite the act, scene and line numbers when they quote something from one of Shakespeare's plays. All of his plays have been printed in many different editions, so citing page numbers would only be confusing. To save space, you can write it like this: 1.1.1–12. That would mean, Act 1, Scene 1, Lines 1 to 12, which is the entire first scene of Macbeth, where the audience meets the witches. You should use a comma to separate line numbers if they are not together, so 1.7.37, 60–61 means Act 1, Scene 7, Line 37 and Lines 60 to 61.

PLOT

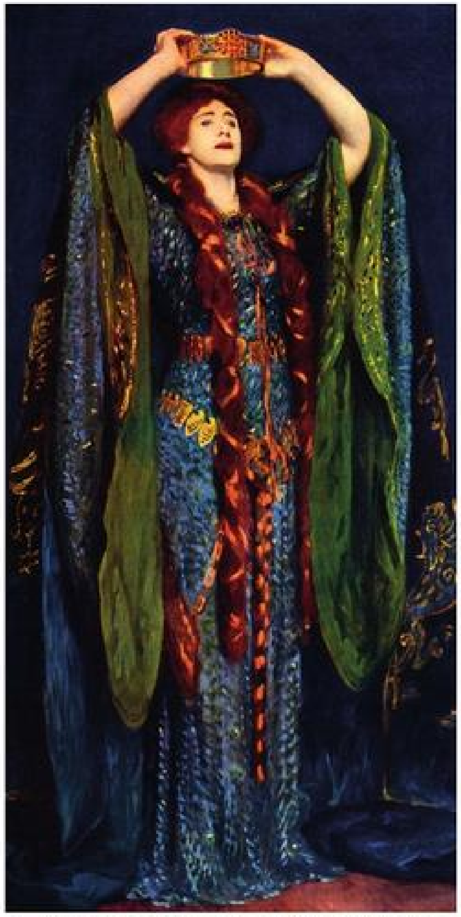
In Act 1, King Duncan has defeated his enemies with Macbeth's help. Macbeth and his friend Banquo meet three witches, who claim that Macbeth, the Thane (high-ranking nobleman) of Glamis, will also become Thane of Cawdor and later King of Scotland. They also say that the descendants of Banquo will be kings. Later, when Duncan rewards Macbeth by making him Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth believes the witches' predictions. He tells his wife what happened and she comes up with a plan to murder the King when he stays with them that night. Macbeth hesitates, but agrees after Lady Macbeth calls him 'green and pale' – meaning a 'coward' – and tells him 'But screw your courage to the sticking-place / And we'll not fail' (1.7.37, 60–61).

In Act 2, Macbeth has a vision of a ghostly dagger, but still murders Duncan. He is disturbed at feeling a separation from God; when the sleepy servants say 'God bless us' and 'Amen,' Macbeth cannot reply, crying, 'But wherefore could I not pronounce "Amen"? / I had most need of blessing, and "Amen" stuck in my throat' (2.3.29, 34–36). Lady Macbeth leaves the bloody daggers with the king's sleeping servants, so they will be blamed for the murder. When Macduff, another thane, arrives, they discover the murdered king and Macbeth kills the servants so they will not talk. The king's sons flee Scotland and, because they now look guilty, Macbeth becomes king.

In Act 3, King Macbeth sends murderers to kill Banquo and his son because Macbeth wants his own children to be kings. Banquo dies, but his son escapes and Macbeth is frightened by Banquo's ghost at dinner, ranting that his secrets will be revealed, that 'Stones have been known to move and trees to speak; / Augurs and understood relations have / By maggot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth / The secret'st man of blood' (3.4.125–128).

In Act 4, Macbeth goes to see the three witches again and they tell him to beware of Macduff, that 'none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth,' and 'Macbeth shall never vanquished be until / Great Birnham Wood to high Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him' (4.1.71, 79–80, 91–93). Macbeth feels confident that these last two cannot happen – Birnam Wood is a forest and Dunsinane Hill is the location of a fortress. However, when he asks about Banquo's descendants, the witches show him a line of eight kings, all of whom look like Banquo. The last one carries a mirror that shows many more kings. Macbeth sends murderers to kill Macduff, but instead Macduff's family and servants are killed.

In Act 5, Lady Macbeth is sleepwalking and dreaming that nothing can wash away the blood on her hands, crying 'Out, damned spot! Out, I say! … What, will these hands ne'er be clean?' (5.1.30, 38). In England, Macduff learns about his family and he joins King Duncan's son Malcolm in leading an army against Macbeth at Dunsinane. They cut limbs from trees of Burnam Wood to hide their numbers. In the fortress, Macbeth learns that his wife has killed herself and that the forest is approaching Dunsinane. During the battle, Macbeth fights Macduff and learns that Macduff was not born in the usual way, but he was cut from his dying mother. Macbeth realises that the things he thought impossible have come true. He is killed by Macduff and Malcolm becomes king.



▲ John Singer Sargent's painting of Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth

GENERAL VOCABULARY

thane	a man, often a clan chief, who was granted land by the Scottish king
ranting	talking in a loud excited and rather confused way because of strong feelings about something
fortress	a military stronghold
limbs	large branches of a tree

CHARACTERS

MACBETH

- related to King Duncan and an officer in Duncan's army
- Thane of Glamis, later Thane of Cawdor and then King of Scotland
- brave on the battlefield, but easily pushed into betrayal by his wife
- cruel when he thinks that he could lose what he has; he commits more murders to hold on to his crown
- haunted by guilt and disturbed at feeling separated from God
- a fatalist: at the end, knowing that all his crimes were useless, he still fights to the death, saying, 'Lay on, Macduff, / And damned be him that first cries, "Hold, enough!"' (5.7.63–64)

GENERAL VOCABULARY

fatalist	a person who believes that there is nothing you can do to prevent events from happening

GENERAL VOCABULARY

ruthlessness showing no mercy or concern for others, especially in pursuit of success or personal gain

traitors people who betray something, such as their friends, or beliefs

prophecy a prediction of a future event

BANQUO

- Macbeth's friend in Duncan's service
- present at the witches' **prophecy** and thinks that Macbeth murdered Duncan
- murdered by Macbeth's assassins, but becomes a ghost who haunts Macbeth

DUNCAN

- the rightful King of Scotland, father of Malcolm and Donalbaine
- honourable and generous to those who are loyal to him; he never suspects that Macbeth is plotting to kill him
- popular due to his successful defence of the country from **traitors**

LADY MACBETH

- more ambitious than her husband and more strong-willed
- the one who makes it look like Duncan's servants murdered him
- someone who considers loyalty to be weak and womanly, while she considers **ruthlessness** to be manly
- powerful in personality, but she feels guilt at her actions, suffering nightmares and later committing suicide

MALCOLM

- Duncan's son and heir, who flees Scotland after his father's death, causing some to suspect him of the murder
- resourceful, gathering an army in England
- a clever man, testing Macduff to make sure Macduff really wants to help Scotland and not just himself
- crowned King of Scotland after the end of the play

MACDUFF

- Thane of Fife, who finds Duncan's body when he arrives at Macbeth's home
- suspicious of Macbeth, goes to England to talk with Malcolm about raising an army
- enraged and heartbroken when he learns that his family has been murdered
- loyal to Scotland and the rightful king
- fights and kills Macbeth, cutting off his head

GENERAL VOCABULARY
prophets people who know or claim that they know what will happen in the future

THREE WITCHES

- also known as the weird sisters, evil creatures of great power who only want to increase misery in the world, as when they say, 'Double, double toil and trouble…' (4.1.20)
- followers of Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft, who tells them off for tempting Macbeth without her involvement
- supernatural beings, greatly feared by the people of Shakespeare's time, particularly by King James who passed laws to make witchcraft punishable by death
- **prophets** who can see the future, but who use that knowledge to tempt people into committing acts of evil, so that 'fair is foul and foul is fair…' (1.1.11)

ACTIVITY 1

A01

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION

▼ CHARACTER TRAITS

SUBJECT VOCABULARY
quotations words from a text

What are the most admirable, positive traits of the most important characters of the play: Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Macduff, Duncan, Malcolm and the witches? Copy and complete the table with each character's traits, finding **quotations** as evidence.

▼ CHARACTER	▼ TRAIT	▼ EVIDENCE
Macbeth		
Lady Macbeth		

THEMES

AMBITION VERSUS LOYALTY

Macbeth is loyal to King Duncan until he hears the witches' prophecy. Even then, he seems content to remain loyal until his wife pushes him to betray Duncan. Macbeth is ambitious and power-hungry, but not as much as Lady Macbeth, who wishes she were not a woman so that she could become more powerful. Macbeth murders his king while he is a guest in Macbeth's home, so Lady Macbeth leaves bloody daggers with the king's servants. Macbeth then murders those servants to prevent them from denying their guilt, therefore committing three crimes. He later blames the king's sons for the murder and then murders his own friend Banquo to try to stop Banquo's heirs from becoming kings. He sends murderers to kill Macduff's family, too.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's ambition drives them to commit crime after crime, first to acquire power, then to hold on to it. However, they cannot enjoy their power because they are always afraid of losing it and guilty about their crimes. Eventually Lady Macbeth goes insane and kills herself, while Macbeth eventually believes that there is no reason to live, saying that life is 'a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing' (5.5.26–29).

THE RIGHTFUL KING

Duncan is the rightful king so, in spite of a war at the beginning of the play, Scotland seems to be well-off under his rule. This is not the case while Macbeth is king, when frightening events occur in Scotland, 'Hours dreadful and things strange,' such as dark storms and Duncan's horses eating each other (2.4.1–19). The play shows that the rightful king will, eventually, rule and that disloyalty to that king will create chaos. Because the audience of Shakespeare's time are aware that their King James is descended from Banquo, they understand one of the messages of the play: citizens of England should be loyal to James, even though he is Scottish, not English, and even though he is not a child of their former ruler, the childless Queen Elizabeth.

In this way, the play works as a declaration of loyalty to King James, who became the patron of Shakespeare's acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, in 1603, who then changed their name to 'The King's Men'. It is no surprise that Shakespeare wrote a play that called for loyalty to the rightful king and showed the consequences of disloyalty.

▲ A still of Macbeth from Orson Welles' movie *Macbeth*

GENERAL VOCABULARY

chaos the absence of any kind of order

patron someone who supports the activities of an organisation, for example by giving money

righteous something motivated by strong belief in the rightness of something or one's own beliefs

VIOLENCE AND CRUELTY

Macbeth is a violent play filled with graphic killings. There is a battle and execution of rebels near the beginning of the play. Then Macbeth murders his own king and kills two innocent servants, hires three murderers who kill Banquo, has the murderers killed, sends more murderers to kill Macduff's family ('What, all my pretty chickens and their dam, / at one fell swoop?' (4.3.224–5)) and finally kills young Siward in the battle at the end, before being killed by Macduff. Lady Macbeth also kills herself.

The play demonstrates that violence to fulfil a person's selfish ambitions results in more violence and leads to cruelty. In contrast, violence in a righteous cause (in this case, defending Scotland from rebels and invaders and restoring the ruling of Scotland to the rightful king) can sometimes be the only way to bring about peace.

It also portrays violence as natural to men, not to women. Lady Macbeth, despite her ambition and strong personality, does not kill anyone directly except herself. She says, 'Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, / And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty' (1.6.38–41). Even she believes that she must stop being a woman in order to commit murder.

PROPHECY AND FATE

It is women, in the form of Hecate, the weird sisters and Lady Macbeth, who drive the action of the play. Hecate and the witches are able to read the future and know the fate of everyone involved. They give Macbeth prophecies that are true but twisted to trick him into committing terrible crimes and feel despair at his death. The witches therefore create greater chaos and suffering than would have occurred if Macbeth had never known his future. By trying to force the prophecy to come true, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth become murderers and Macbeth also murders Banquo in trying to prevent another prophecy from coming true. Because he believes later prophecies, he murders Macduff's family and falsely thinks that he is safe from harm. While the prophecies are true, his understanding of them is not. By this, the play seems to condemn ambitious women, showing them to be unnatural; in the modern day, however, this can be interpreted that preventing women from having equal status to men is dangerous.

STAGECRAFT AND SETTING

GENERAL VOCABULARY

gloomy	dark, especially in a way that makes you feel sad
hot-blooded	passionate

STAGECRAFT

This is the shortest of Shakespeare's tragedies and is typically staged on dark, **gloomy** sets to reflect the play's dark themes and dark weather. Notes on stagecraft are rare in the written form of Shakespeare's plays. However, one of the most important, but most often forgotten, things about Shakespeare is that his plays are meant to be watched, not read. Of course, you must read the plays in order to study the language and characters closely, but it is best to watch one or more productions of *Macbeth* before reading the play. Every person involved in staging the play has different ideas about how to interpret it. Lady Macbeth can be portrayed as **hot-blooded** or as cold and calculating. Macbeth has been portrayed as weak-willed or as brave, and often both.

Many productions of all of Shakespeare's plays are available as films or TV adaptations. There are movies by Orson Welles and Roman Polanski, TV dramas by the BBC and others, and reinterpretations in other cultures by Akira Kurosawa and Vishal Bhardwaj. All of these add their own unique ways of staging the play. For example, in Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (Japanese title, *Kumonosu-jō*) the normal world is full of straight lines, while the supernatural world features spinning wheels, indicating opposition of natural and supernatural, male and female.

SETTING

These versions set in other times and places highlight the importance of setting. The historical Macbeth lived in Scotland around 1000 AD, but the play was written and performed in Elizabethan England 600 years later. Even today, many productions feature characters in Elizabethan costumes, even though

▲ A still from Akira Kurosawa's film *Throne of Blood* those costumes would have appeared very strange to the real Macbeth. Kurosawa's version is set in medieval Japan and this has important effects on the production. Kurosawa chose to replace the three witches with a single forest spirit and, instead of having his Macbeth character, Washizu, die by having his head cut off, he is killed by his own soldiers who fire many arrows into him. Other versions have been set in the modern day, using criminal gangs instead of Scottish nobility (Ken Hughes's 1955 *Joe Macbeth* or Vishal Bhardwaj's 2003 *Maqbool*), while Orson Welles staged a voodoo version in Harlem in 1936 that was set in Haiti.

Typically, however, the play is set in medieval Scotland, long ago and far away to the north, wild and dark and full of danger. The weather is stormy and gloomy, one character saying, 'By th'clock 'tis day, / And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp' (2.4.6–7). Events take place on nine days, but it is likely that many days pass between some of them and the length from beginning to end could cover a few weeks, a few months or even a few years.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

voodoo magical beliefs and practices used as a form of religion, especially by people in Haiti

smears spreads a liquid or soft substance over a surface, especially in a careless or untidy way

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, CREATIVITY, ADAPTABILITY, TEAMWORK, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

▼ CULTURAL INTERPRETATIONS

Shakespeare's plays have been staged in many different cultures and times. Work with a partner or in a small group and imagine how *Macbeth* would be different if it were set in another culture which you are familiar with (perhaps your own).

- Would you set it in the past or today?
- What position in society would the characters occupy? How would their motives change?
- Would the three witches be replaced by some other sort of character?
- What casting, costume and scenery choices would you make?

Choose a scene, such as 1.7 (Macbeth and Lady Macbeth argue about killing the king), 2.1 (Macbeth sees the 'dagger of the mind' and kills the king), 3.4 (Banquo's ghost appears), 4.1 (the witches show Macbeth visions of his future), 5.1 (Lady Macbeth walks in her sleep), or 5.5 (Macbeth learns of his wife's death). Practise and perform the scene for the rest of the class, then explain your choices and why you made them.

LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

BLOOD

Blood features heavily in *Macbeth*. Throats are cut and heads are chopped off. Lady Macbeth smears Duncan's servants with blood and leaves bloody daggers with them; she claims she would 'dash the brains out' of her own baby rather than lose the chance to become king. After he kills Duncan, Macbeth asks, 'Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine, / Making the green one red' (2.3.63–66), meaning that the blood from his hands will turn the sea red. Later Lady Macbeth believes that she still has drops of blood on her hands that she cannot wash away. Blood is also a symbol of family. The eight kings that are descended from Banquo are part of his bloodline.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbol in literature, people, objects or events that have a meaning other than their literal meaning

OPPOSITES

Shakespeare commonly has characters that are paired opposites. They contrast each other and therefore highlight each other's characteristics. Macbeth and Macduff are of the same rank and have similar names, but they are enemies who fight at the end because Macbeth is a murderous traitor while Macduff only wants to save his country. Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff are also opposites. Although they both criticise their husbands, Lady Macduff cares for her child and worries about her husband, while Lady Macbeth drives her husband to murder children. The murderers and the warriors are also opposites, contrasting dishonourable murder and killing in honourable battle.

SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

Most of the play is written in iambic pentameter, a form of blank verse that provides a rhythm to the speech. Each line has five pairs of syllables, an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, like a heartbeat. Therefore, when he sees Banquo's ghost in 3.4.128, Macbeth says, 'It WILL have BLOOD, they SAY. Blood WILL have BLOOD.' Certain words are emphasised for dramatic effect and this also makes it easier for the actors to remember the lines and to get the emotional emphasis correct. On the other hand, when the witches are speaking, they use a trochaic beat, the opposite of iambic, with the stress on the first syllable. It makes the weird sisters sound weirder, because they sound subtly different from the other characters.

Sometimes characters do not speak in verse at all. In a comic interlude in 2.3.1–31, a servant gives a speech about knocking as he goes to answer the door. This is done in normal speech, which is more light-hearted and provides the audience with a chance to laugh amid all the darkness.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

iambic using a light, unstressed beat followed by a heavy, stressed one: tee-*tum* (this pair of beats is called an iamb)
pentameter a line of poetry containing five pairs of beats or ten syllables
blank verse non-rhyming poetry
trochaic using a heavy, stressed beat followed by a light, unstressed one: *tum*-te (this pair of beats is called a trochee)
comic interlude an amusing moment or scene within a tragedy

ACTIVITY 3 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, CREATIVITY

▼ ANALYSING LADY MACBETH

Read closely and check your understanding of Lady Macbeth's speech below (1.7.47–59). Read the rest of the scene to understand the context and explain what you understand and do not understand. Attempt to translate it into simple, modern English. Consider especially what the speech says about Lady Macbeth's personality.

> What beast was't, then,
> That made you break this enterprise to me?
> When you durst do it, then you were a man;
> And, to be more than what you were, you would
> Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
> Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
> They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
> Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
> Have done to this.

ACTIVITY 4 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING

▼ ANALYSING MACBETH

Contrast the speech in Activity 3 with this one by Macbeth near the end of the play (5.5.19–28). What is Macbeth thinking about? Why does he think this way and how has he changed between the beginning of the play and here, when his story is almost over?

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle.
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A01 **A02** **A04**

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

1 Explore the theme of ambition in *Macbeth*. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

2 'Violence does not solve anything.' In the context of this play, in what ways is that statement true or false? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

3 Consider the status of women in the play. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

4 'Macbeth is responsible for his own downfall.' Discuss culpability in *Macbeth*. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 Explore the significance of the supernatural in *Macbeth*. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

GENERAL VOCABULARY

culpability blame or responsibility

5 *Macbeth* was written by William Shakespeare during a time in which many people were concerned about the supernatural.[1] This is shown throughout the play with the supernatural influencing the plot and many of the characters' actions.

The witches are the most obvious example of the supernatural. Banquo remarks that they 'look not like th' inhabitants o' th' Earth' which immediately creates a sense of mystery and even possibly horror for some audiences.[2] The appearance of the witches varies in different productions of the play with some resembling normal women while others choose to represent them in a much more dramatic, supernatural way.[3] By having the witches speak in such a distinctive, rhythmic style[4], they are clearly different to the other characters, ensuring their statements such as 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair' are unsettling in their style and dramatic irony.

[1] A04: This comment shows contextual awareness. Can you think of a way of expressing this more precisely? What do you know about witches and magic in 1611, when the play was first performed?

[2] A04: You could comment on the different reactions of audiences in Shakespeare's lifetime and of audiences today. How have attitudes to the supernatural changed?

[3] A02: This comment shows an awareness of Macbeth as a piece of drama, meeting the requirement to discuss form.

[4] A02: This comment shows an understanding of Shakespeare's language choices. Do you know any other terms for exploring their way of speaking?

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use the exam-style questions provided to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your response.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

In what ways are kings better or worse than other sorts of leaders? Discuss the characteristics of a good ruler, using examples from *Macbeth* and from current events to support your position.

OTHER MEDIA

- *Macbeth*: a 2015 film based on the play, written by Jacob Koskoff, Todd Louiso and Michael Lesslie, and directed by Justin Kurzel.
- *uMabatha*: a 1970 play, written by South African playwright Welcome Msomi, that adapts the play for Zulu culture.
- *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*: an 1865 novel by Russian writer Nikolai Leskov, that shows the action of the play from Lady Macbeth's perspective.

▲ A cemetery in Scotland

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564 and died in 1616. He moved to London as a young man and became a leading actor in a theatre company called The Lord Chamberlain's Men. He wrote over 30 plays, most of which are still performed today.

The Merchant of Venice was published in 1598. The play is set in Italy, but it tells modern audiences about 16th-century England and Elizabethan attitudes towards people of different races and faiths. Anti-Semitism in England dates back to the medieval period, when Christians were encouraged to think of Jews as the people who had murdered Jesus Christ. In 1190, approximately 150 Jews were massacred in the city of York, and Jewish people were officially expelled from England in 1290.

The play's depiction of Shylock has informed stereotypes about Jewish people for centuries. For this reason, *The Merchant of Venice* is considered to be controversial by some people. However, modern productions often treat the play as a parable about prejudice and the results of prejudice, which is very relevant today.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

Anti-Semitism prejudice against Jewish people
depiction representation of something
stereotypes fixed and overly simplistic images of a person or group of people
prejudice an opinion that is not based on fact or experience

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

parable a simple story told to teach a lesson, often a moral lesson

▲ The star of David is a Jewish religious symbol. Anti-Semitism was a key feature of the Nazi regime in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Approximately six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust.

RESEARCH

Modern productions of *The Merchant of Venice* often use the play's focus on discrimination to make political points about contemporary society. Find out about ways in which people have used the text to comment on their own times. For example, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) has an online stage history of productions which you could find by doing an internet search.

PLOT

A Venetian merchant, Antonio, agrees to lend a sum of money to his friend, Bassanio. Bassanio wants to marry a beautiful wealthy woman called Portia, and he needs the money to make himself seem like a worthy suitor. Antonio does not have the money yet, as his merchant ships are still at sea. However, he is confident that the ships will arrive soon and that he will have the money in the near future, so he asks the Jewish moneylender, Shylock, to lend him 3000 ducats. Shylock dislikes Antonio, who has been rude to him in the past. However, he agrees to lend the money on condition that, if Antonio fails to repay him, Shylock will have the right to cut a pound of flesh from Antonio's body. Bassanio does not trust Shylock, but he takes the money.

In Belmont, Portia complains to Nerissa, who is her waiting woman, about the fact that she cannot choose her own husband. When Portia's father died, he stated that anyone wishing to marry his daughter would have to pass a test. Each suitor has to choose one casket from a choice of three. The correct casket contains a picture of Portia and will allow the suitor to marry her.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

discrimination the practice of treating one person or group differently from another in an unfair way
contemporary living or happening at the same time as something else
Venetian a person or object from Venice
suitor a man who wants to marry a particular woman
ducats gold coins
pound a unit of weight measurement equivalent to approximately 454 grams
casket a box or chest

However, if a suitor chooses the wrong casket, he cannot marry Portia or any other woman. The first casket is made of gold, the second of silver and the third of lead. The Prince of Morocco chooses the gold casket, which contains a skull, while the Prince of Aragon chooses the silver casket, which contains a picture of a fool.

That evening, Shylock leaves his daughter Jessica alone at home. Jessica and Bassanio's friend Lorenzo are in love, and they have planned to elope and get married without Shylock's consent. While Shylock is out, Jessica takes some of his money and disguises herself as a boy to escape with Lorenzo. Bassanio and his friend Gratiano are travelling to Belmont that night, and Lorenzo and Jessica go with them. Shylock is furious about the fact that Jessica has taken his money and run away with a Christian.

Portia and Bassanio have met before, and it turns out that they get on well. Bassanio chooses the lead casket, which contains Portia's picture. Portia accepts him as her husband, and Gratiano proposes marriage to Nerissa. The women give the men rings as a symbol of their relationship and instruct them to keep the rings safe, no matter what happens.

A letter arrives from Antonio, explaining that all of his ships have been destroyed and he cannot repay Shylock. Bassanio hurries back to Venice with Gratiano in order to try to clear the debt. Portia says that she and Nerissa will go to a nunnery while their husbands are absent, but actually the women disguise themselves as men and travel to Venice as well.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

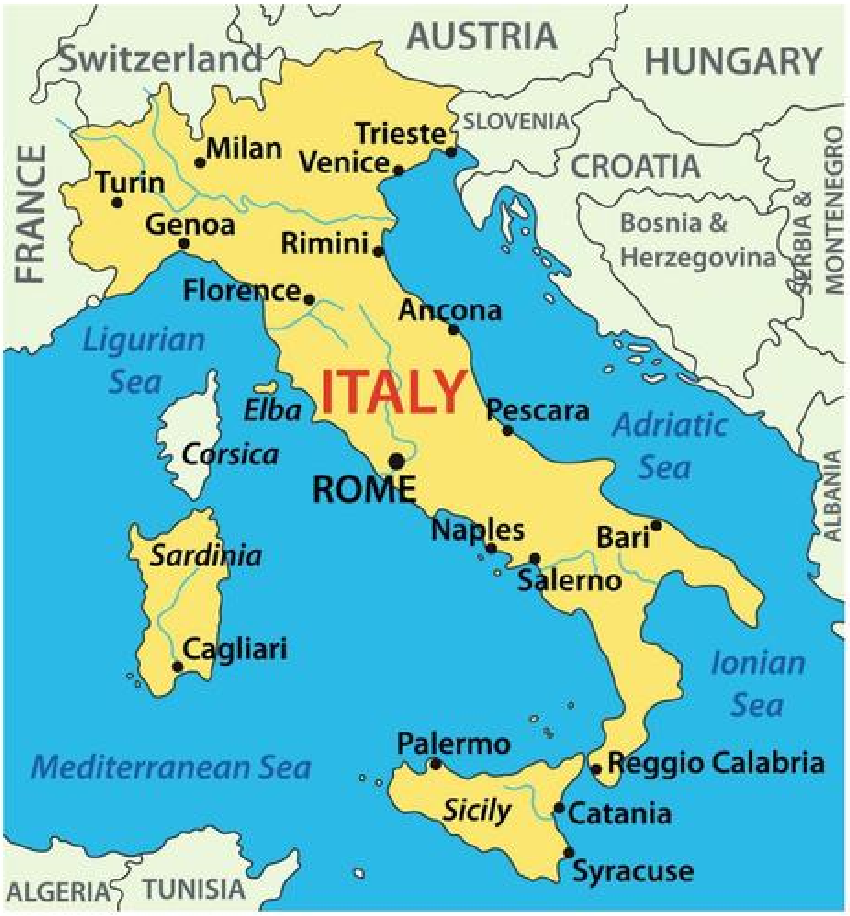
lead a soft heavy grey metal that melts easily and is poisonous, used to cover roofs, or in the past, for water pipes. It is a chemical element: symbol Pb

elope run away secretly in order to get married

nunnery a building or set of buildings where nuns (women in a religious community) live

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbol in literature, people, objects or events that have a meaning other than their literal meaning


AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
Switzerland
SLOVENIA
CROATIA
Bosnia & Herzegovina
SERBIA & MONTENEGRO
FRANCE
Milan
Trieste
Venice
Turin
Genoa
Rimini
Florence
Ancona
Ligurian Sea
Elba
ITALY
Pescara
Adriatic Sea
Corsica
ROME
ALBANIA
Naples
Bari
Sardinia
Salerno
Cagliari
Ionian Sea
Palermo
Reggio Calabria
Mediterranean Sea
Sicily
Catania
Syracuse
ALGERIA
TUNISIA

▲ Venice is a city in Italy. In the 16th century, it was an important trading post.

In Venice, the case of Shylock and Antonio is heard by the Duke. Shylock demands justice and refuses to take money instead of the pound of flesh, even though Bassanio offers to repay twice the debt owed. The Duke calls for a lawyer to advise him, and a young lawyer called Balthasar arrives. In fact, Balthasar is Portia, disguised as a lawyer; Nerissa accompanies her, disguised as Balthasar's clerk. Portia asks whether Shylock will be merciful and take the money rather than the flesh. He refuses. Portia then states that he has the right to take only the flesh, as that was the deal, and that if he takes anything in addition, such as blood, then his money and possessions will be confiscated by the state.

Now, Shylock tries to back down and asks for the money, but Portia refuses and promises justice instead. She accuses Shylock of trying to murder a citizen of Venice, stating that he will have his possessions confiscated and be sentenced to death. Shylock's life is spared and he is allowed to keep half of his wealth, but only if he converts to Christianity and gives the other half of his wealth to Lorenzo and Jessica.

Still disguised as men, Portia and Nerissa take the rings from Bassanio and Gratiano as payment for their legal services. They then return to Belmont. When the men arrive, the women tell them off for giving away their rings so easily, before revealing the fact that they were the lawyers. Finally, news arrives that three of Antonio's ships have in fact arrived safely into harbour, and the couples make up.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

clerk	a secretary or assistant with administrative duties
merciful	being kind to people and forgiving them rather than punishing them or being cruel
confiscated	officially taken private property away from someone, usually as a punishment
make up	restore a relationship after an argument

ACTIVITY 1 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPRETATION, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

1 Choose three characters from *The Merchant of Venice*. For each character, choose a few quotations from the play that you think affect how the audience feels about them.

For example, for Bassanio, you might choose the line 'I owe you much and, like a wilful youth, / That which I owe is lost' from Act 1 Scene 1. You might decide that this could either make the audience laugh or dislike Bassanio, depending on how the line is delivered.

2 When you have finished, share your ideas with the rest of the group.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

quotations	words from a text

CHARACTERS

PORTIA

- a wealthy and beautiful woman
- owner of the Belmont estate
- obliged by her father's will to marry the first man who passes the test of the three caskets
- intelligent, with a good understanding of Venetian law
- brave and independent-spirited
- rude about every suitor except Bassanio
- the biggest part in the play and has the most lines

DID YOU KNOW?

Women were not allowed to act on stage in the 16th century, which meant that theatre companies were all-male. Female characters would have been played by boys dressed as women.

SHYLOCK

- a wealthy moneylender who lends Antonio 3000 ducats
- a Jew
- Jessica's father
- obsessively concerned about his wealth
- regularly insulted by Antonio and other characters
- discriminated against because of his faith and ethnicity
- furious when Jessica elopes with Lorenzo
- forced to convert to Christianity at the end of the play

▶ **Compare the characters of Bassanio and Portia. In what ways are they different? Do they share any similarities?**

BASSANIO

- a young Venetian man
- bad with money and already in debt to Antonio when he asks for more money
- intent on marrying Portia
- unwilling to give up Portia's ring to the 'lawyer'
- apologetic when Portia asks him about the missing ring

GENERAL VOCABULARY

confidante a woman who you tell your secrets to or who you talk to about personal things

NERISSA

- Portia's waiting woman and **confidante**
- intelligent and funny
- willing to assist Portia in deceiving Bassanio and Gratiano
- able to trick Gratiano into giving away the ring that she gave to him

ANTONIO

- the Venetian merchant of the play's title
- a close friend of Bassanio
- exceedingly generous to Bassanio, despite the money that he is owed
- rude to Shylock when they meet at the market in Venice
- a relatively small part in the play

JESSICA

- Shylock's daughter
- elopes with Lorenzo, another of Bassanio's friends
- willing to steal her father's money and run away with Lorenzo
- willing to convert to Christianity
- friendly with her father's servant, Lancelet Gobbo
- embarrassed by having to disguise herself as a boy in order to escape Venice
- intelligent and funny

GENERAL VOCABULARY

fool a court jester or clown
mercy kindness shown to people by forgiving them rather than punishing them or being cruel
in Antonio's favour to rule in somebody's favour means to govern in a way that gives that person an advantage
prosperity wealth and success

LANCELET GOBBO

- the son of old Gobbo
- Shylock's servant
- unhappy in Shylock's service, so he asks to go and work for Bassanio instead
- often confuses his words, with comic results
- willing to trick his blind father into believing that he is dead
- the character that may have been played by the theatre company's fool

THE DUKE

- the ruler of Venice
- the judge in the case of Antonio and Shylock
- demands that Shylock shows mercy towards Antonio
- unable to rule in Antonio's favour, because Venice's prosperity and reputation for trading depends on its reputation for justice among foreign merchants
- apparently shows Shylock mercy by sparing his life

GRATIANO

- Bassanio's friend
- talkative and jokey
- not very serious

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** PROBLEM SOLVING, INTERPRETATION

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

1 Identify the relationships between fathers and their daughters in the play and compare them.

▼ FATHER AND DAUGHTER	▼ FEATURES OF RELATIONSHIP

2 Look for any similarities or differences. Has your analysis changed your understanding of the play and its themes? If so, how?

THEMES

PRETENCE AND APPEARANCES

> So may the outward shows be least themselves,
> The world is still deceived with ornament. (Bassanio)

One of the key themes of *The Merchant of Venice* is the theme of pretence and appearances. The central image of the three caskets acts as a parable about the value of appearances. While the golden casket contains a skull and the silver casket contains the picture of a fool, the lead casket holds the picture of Portia. This teaches Bassanio and the audience not to trust appearances, suggesting that beautiful exteriors can hide internal ugliness.

Many of the characters in the play disguise themselves. In Act 1 Scene 1, Bassanio needs to borrow money so that he can '[show] a more swelling port', meaning to appear richer than he is. Lorenzo and the masquers in Act 2 Scene 6 disguise themselves and Jessica disguises herself as a boy in order to elope. Later, in Act 4 Scene 1, Portia and Nerissa disguise themselves as men to defend Antonio. Disguises can create comedy, but they can also make a serious point. For example, they suggest that Portia can only demonstrate her intelligence and **eloquence** when dressed as a man. This implies that, while a woman may be worthy for reasons other than her beauty, this is only recognised by others when they believe her to be male.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

eloquence the ability to express your ideas and opinions well, especially in a way that influences people

gaberdine a long loose garment

reputedly according to what some people say

The theme of appearance also relates to discrimination against characters of different races or faiths. For example, the Prince of Morocco says, 'Mislike me not for my complexion', implying that he expects Portia (and perhaps the audience) to dislike him because of the colour of his skin. Similarly, in Act 1 Scene 3, Shylock describes how Antonio spat upon his 'Jewish **gaberdine**'. This suggests that his clothes are different to those of Christians and that his appearance tells others, including the audience, that he is Jewish.

PREJUDICE

Many characters in the play are prejudiced against Shylock. When he describes the abuse that he receives from Antonio and other merchants, Antonio does not deny this behaviour but instead threatens Shylock with the same treatment again. When Shakespeare wrote *The Merchant of Venice*, anti-Semitism was common and Shylock would not have been considered a **sympathetic** character by audiences in the 1590s. In Act 2 Scene 8, Shylock is described as a 'dog' and seems more concerned about his money than his daughter, suggesting that he lacks normal parental feelings.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sympathetic applied to a character in fiction, this means a character who is liked by the reader or other characters

However, some moments in the play suggest that Shylock's character is not just a prejudiced stereotype. In Act 3 Scene 1, Shylock argues that Jews are also human, asking, '[if] you prick us, do we not bleed?'. Later, Shylock mourns the loss of a particular ring, which Jessica has **reputedly** exchanged for a monkey. He does not grieve for its monetary value but for its sentimental value, because it was given to him by his wife. He states, 'I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys', showing that he does in fact have human feelings and cares for more than money. This directly contradicts the behaviour of Bassanio and Gratiano, who give away the rings given to them by Portia and Nerissa, suggesting that Shylock may be a better person than Bassanio and Gratiano.

The play also implies that Shylock's behaviour has been caused by prejudice. In Act 3 Scene 1, Shylock exclaims, 'The villainy you teach me I will execute', promising to live up to prejudicial expectations of Jewish behaviour. Later, Shylock tells Antonio: 'Thou calledst me a dog before thou hadst a cause, /

But since I am a dog, beware my fangs'. This implies that he is simply playing a part that Antonio's abuse has created.

▶ **How sympathetic do you feel towards Shylock and towards Antonio? Do your feelings change or are they the same throughout the course of the play?**

COMMUNICATION

Communication is an important theme in *The Merchant of Venice*. The audience is alerted to this in the very first scene, where Bassanio talks about receiving speechless messages from Portia's eyes. The character of Lancelet Gobbo continues to emphasise this theme by comically confusing his words. In Act 3 Scene 5, Lorenzo deliberately misunderstands him, leading Lancelet to exclaim, 'I pray thee, understand a plain man in his plain meaning'.

Communication is also important in the role of women. In Act 3 Scene 2, Portia says that a modest young woman 'hath no tongue but thought', meaning that she must moderate what she says. However, Portia's power of speech is key to the play as it saves Antonio's life, but this is only possible when she is disguised as a man. Later, Portia uses her power of speech to take the ring back from Bassanio, suggesting that she is in control of their relationship.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

moderate	make something less extreme or violent

JUSTICE AND MERCY

Portia's 'quality of mercy' speech in Act 4 Scene 1 is one of the most famous speeches in the play. It emphasises the importance of mercy in life and in the Christian faith, and makes the point that justice must be moderated by mercy. However, to modern eyes, this emphasis on mercy may seem ironic, as Shylock's punishment does not seem very merciful. Shylock wants Antonio to face strict unmerciful justice, but this is used against him when Portia cleverly turns the law against him. As an act of supposed mercy, the Duke then refuses to have Shylock executed, but an enforced conversion to Christianity does not seem merciful to modern audiences.

DID YOU KNOW?

Christian audiences in the 16th century may have seen the conversion as an act of mercy, as they would have believed that it would save Shylock's soul.

▶ **What does Portia mean when she says that the 'quality of mercy is not strained'? Identify which characters, if any, act according to this statement.**

STAGECRAFT AND SETTING

GENRE

The Merchant of Venice is usually categorised as a comedy and it conforms to many of the expectations of a comedy. Like other comedies, such as *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, the play features romances between young lovers and women dressing as men, and ends with a series of marriages.

However, *The Merchant of Venice* is not a straightforward comedy. When Bassanio presents himself as a rich and worthy suitor to Portia, the audience is aware that actually he is in debt. His intention to marry Portia focuses on her wealth before her beauty and character, and his description of Portia begins, 'In Belmont is a lady richly left'. The audience may wonder whether Bassanio is in love with Portia or is only interested in her money.

The play's treatment of Shylock also complicates the play. Contemporary audiences probably felt that Shylock's fate was well-deserved, but his acceptance in Act 4 Scene 1 is not what might be expected of a straightforward villain. Rather than arguing with the other characters, which may have helped audiences to justify the mercilessness of his treatment, he simply says, 'I am content', and leaves the stage shortly after. This makes him seem defenceless rather than a villain.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

ironic	using words to convey a meaning that is completely opposite to their apparent meaning
villain	the main bad character in a film, play or story

SETTING

Like many of Shakespeare's plays, *The Merchant of Venice* is set abroad. The exotic overseas setting may have been chosen to attract contemporary audiences. However, it also allows Shakespeare to discuss problems in a neutral setting. Dramatists often use foreign or historical settings to examine problems with their own society.

▶ **How do different productions of the play use setting to make their point or have a particular effect on the audience?**

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

dramatic irony a device, used in novels, plays, poetry and films, where the audience knows something about a situation that the character (or characters) involved does not

DRAMATIC IRONY

In *The Merchant of Venice*, dramatic irony creates suspense and comedy. An example of suspense can be seen in Act 3 Scene 2 where Bassanio chooses between the caskets. By this point, the audience has seen the Princes of Morocco and Aragon fail, so they know that the lead casket is the correct choice. Putting the audience in this privileged position creates dramatic irony when Bassanio talks through the three options to himself.

An example of comedy can be seen in Act 4 Scene 1, when Bassanio and Gratiano talk about sacrificing their wives to save Antonio:

> Bassanio: I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all
> Here to this devil, to deliver you.
> Portia: Your wife would give you little thanks for that,
> If she were by to hear you make the offer.
> Gratiano: I have a wife, whom, I protest, I love.
> I would she were in heaven, so she could
> Entreat some power to change this currish Jew.
> Nerissa: 'Tis well you offer it behind her back,
> The wish would make else an unquiet house.

Unlike Bassanio and Gratiano, the audience knows that their wives can hear this, and so they laugh both at the women's words and the husbands' lack of awareness.

ACTIVITY 3 **A01** **SKILLS** INTERPRETATION, ADAPTABILITY

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Watch two different productions of *The Merchant of Venice* and compare the way in which the actors who play Shylock deliver their lines, particularly in Act 5 Scene 1.

1 What are the similarities and differences?
2 How does this change the way you feel about the character?

LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

RINGS

Rings are used as a symbol of relationships between husbands and wives. Traditionally, men give women a ring when they propose marriage, which implies that the man defines the relationship. However, in this play, Portia and Nerissa give rings to their romantic partners, suggesting that they, and not Bassanio and Gratiano, are in control of their relationships.

Portia is a relatively unusual 16th-century woman, as she owns a house and estate. Even after marrying Bassanio and claiming to have handed ownership of her possessions to him, she still refers to Belmont as her house in Act 5

Scene 1. Portia is therefore presented as a powerful woman in a world full of men, and her use of the ring to test Bassanio reinforces this representation.

The symbol of the ring also continues the theme of money and trade, and is used to draw a distinction between the attitude of Bassanio and Gratiano and the attitude of Shylock. When Bassanio and Gratiano give away their rings as payment for the lawyer and clerk, this suggests that they only understand the rings' commercial value rather than their symbolic value. In comparison, Shylock mourns the loss of a ring that he would not have given away for any price, suggesting that he is capable of appreciating symbolic value far more than monetary value.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

mourns	feels very sad because something no longer exists
inheritance	money, property or other posessions that you receive from someone who has died
virtue	moral goodness of character and behaviour

ACTIVITY 4 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

The three caskets are the central symbols of the play. Working in pairs, make a list of the different things that they symbolise. How do they add to the audience's understanding of the play's key themes?

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbolic	where a person, object or event is used by a writer to convey a meaning beyond its literal meaning
symbolise	using symbols to represent particular concepts or ideas

MONEY AND COMMERCE

The role of Antonio is a very small part, but the play's title seems to focus on him as the merchant of Venice and therefore on a key symbol: merchant trading. Venice was an important trading post in the 16th century, and everyone and everything in this commercial setting can be bought or sold. For example, the first thing that Bassanio says about Portia is that she is worth a lot due to her inheritance. Even when he talks about her character, he says that she is 'nothing undervalued' in comparison with other women. This use of commercial language in personal relationships suggests that many of the characters are too focused on financial gain to understand the greater importance of virtue. However, by the end of the play, Bassanio learns that he should have valued 'the virtue of the ring' rather than its monetary price.

VERSE AND PROSE

The language form in *The Merchant of Venice* alternates between verse and prose.

The verse is usually written in iambic pentameter, producing a line of verse that contains ten syllables with the stress landing on every second syllable: 'In **sooth**, I **know** not **why** I **am** so **sad**'. Verse is associated with nobility and formal ceremony, and the characters who speak in verse are usually important or upper-class characters such as Portia and Bassanio.

In comparison, the lower-class or comic characters usually speak in prose, which is informal text with no metre. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Lancelet Gobbo and his father speak entirely in prose. However, some characters such as Shylock speak in both verse and prose. A change from verse to prose or prose to verse can imply a change of tone, a change in relationships between characters or a change in the way in which the audience is supposed to judge a character.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

iambic	using a light, unstressed beat followed by a heavy, stressed one: tee-*tum* (this pair of beats is called an iamb)
pentameter	a line of poetry containing five pairs of beats or ten syllables
metre	the rhythmical pattern of speaking used in verse

ACTIVITY 5 **AO1** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, REASONING, EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Find three examples in the play where the language form changes from verse to prose or from prose to verse. This could happen during a scene or from one scene to the next. For each example, write a short paragraph describing:

1 what happens on stage when this change of form takes place
2 the effect that the change of form has on the audience.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

AO1 **AO2** **AO4**

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your response.

1 Show how attitudes towards people of other races and faiths are presented in *The Merchant of Venice*. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

2 In what ways is setting important in *The Merchant of Venice*? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

3 Explore the relationship between Portia and Nerissa. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

4 Explore the significance of money and trade within *The Merchant of Venice*. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 What is the significance of justice and mercy in *The Merchant of Venice*? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 The theme of justice and mercy is integral to the plot of The Merchant of Venice.[1] Shylock holds a great sense of injustice in the way he has always been discriminated against as a Jew[2]. Lending money was seen as immoral at this time, and although Christians disapproved, it was the only possible way that Jews were allowed to make money. Christians like Antonio and Bassanio benefit from money-lending, so it shows the hypocrisy in Venetian society[3]. Shylock's bitterness is evident in all his dealings with Antonio. He refuses to give up on receiving his pound of flesh from Antonio, even when Portia reasons with him to be merciful. Shylock's declares in court that if the judge denies his rights, he will 'let the danger light / Upon your charter and your city's freedom'. 'Charter' means law, so he is threatening the law and order of the whole of Venice.[4]

[1] AO1: This opening sentence shows consideration of the text as a whole.

[2] AO4: This comment shows good contextual understanding.

[3] AO4: These sentences show how you can expand a contextual point. These ideas are relevant to the question, as they explain why this form of discrimination was particularly unjust.

[4] AO1: This comment on the quotation makes clear how seriously Shylock takes the idea of justice. Consider what happens next – what could you say about the judge's decision to pardon Antonio and punish Shylock?

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

'*The Merchant of Venice* is anti-Semitic.' How far do you agree with this statement?

FURTHER READING

- Overview of a selection of productions by the RSC – search for 'Royal Shakespeare Company Staging The Merchant of Venice'.
- Online access to the Complete Works of Shakespeare, provided by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology – search for 'The Complete Works of William Shakespeare MIT'.

OTHER MEDIA

- Film: there have been numerous film adaptations, including *The Maori Merchant of Venice* (2002, directed by Don Selwyn), which was in Maori with English subtitles, and a 2004 film directed by Michael Radford and starring Al Pacino as Shylock.
- Television: the full BBC Television Shakespeare adaptation, directed by Jack Gold, can be watched in full on the BBC Worldwide YouTube channel.
- Opera: there have been three operas based on the play, most recently André Tchaikowsky's *The Merchant of Venice* which premiered in 2013.

As with many of Shakepeare's plays, *The Merchant of Venice* has been adapted numerous times. You can find out about other adaptations by undertaking some research on the internet.

▶ Venetian canals

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
JANE AUSTEN

▲ A portrait of Jane Austen based on a sketch drawn by her sister Cassandra

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Jane Austen was born in 1775 and died in 1817. She was the daughter of a rector and was one of eight children, two of whom were daughters. It is thought that, when she was 27 years old, Jane rejected a proposal of marriage; neither she nor her sister Cassandra ever got married. Her novels were published anonymously and her identity as the author was kept a secret until after her death.

Austen lived through Britain's wars against Napoleon, including both the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 and the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. However, these historic military events were not the subject of Austen's work, although military officers often appear in her novels, such as in *Pride and Prejudice*. Instead, Austen's work focuses on the middle and upper classes with which she was familiar, examining how people from these classes behaved, their snobberies, marriages and family lives.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

anonymously when the author of a work or someone who does something (usually charitable) is not identified by their name

PLOT

The plot of *Pride and Prejudice* centres on marriage and this is set out in its famous opening lines: 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife'.

A rich man named Mr Bingley has come to live in Netherfield. This causes much local excitement, especially for Mrs Bennet, who has five unmarried daughters: Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Lydia and Kitty. A 'good marriage' will be essential for the Bennet sisters because they will not inherit their father's house and estate after he dies. Instead, inheritance laws state that a male heir will inherit.

Mrs Bennet is keen for her eldest daughter, Jane, to meet Mr Bingley and Jane dances with Bingley at a village ball. However, Bingley's close friend, Mr Darcy, seems very proud and arrogant. He meets Elizabeth, the next eldest Bennet sister, but he is snobbish about the Bennets' low social status and is quite rude about Elizabeth. Later, Elizabeth finds out that, apparently, Darcy has acted dishonourably to Mr Wickham, who is a handsome and pleasant young officer based at Meryton. Darcy also intervenes in the relationship forming between Jane and Bingley, disappointing Jane's hopes of marrying Bingley. As a result, Elizabeth takes a strong dislike to Darcy.

Gradually, Darcy changes his mind about Elizabeth. He appreciates her intelligent conversation and her 'bright eyes' to such an extent that, while they are together at his aunt's house, Rosings, he declares his love for her. To his surprise, Elizabeth rejects him, partly because he separated Jane and Bingley and partly because Elizabeth believes him to have behaved badly towards Wickham. Elizabeth has very different ideas about marriage from many of those around her, believing that marriage should be based on love. When

GENERAL VOCABULARY

rector a priest in the Church of England
Napoleon Emperor of France from 1804 to 1815, he first came to power in 1799 and led the French in a series of wars against Britain and its allies
snobberies behaviour or attitudes which show that you think you are better than other people, because you belong to a higher social class or know much more than they do
inherit receive money, property or other possessions from someone after they have died
snobbish behaving in a way that shows you think you are better than other people because you are from a higher social class or know more than they do

Elizabeth turns down the unpleasant Mr Collins's proposal of marriage, her friend Charlotte marries him instead, for practical financial reasons.

▶ **Do you think that the character of Mr Collins has any good qualities? Do you think Austen only included him just to be a figure of fun? Why else might she have included him?**

Darcy realises that he must behave differently to be able to gain Elizabeth's affections. He writes to her, explaining why he acted as he did in the cases of Jane and Bingley and of Wickham. He explains that Wickham almost managed to seduce Darcy's younger sister, Georgiana, in an attempt to take possession of her money. After reading this letter, Elizabeth begins to question whether she has misjudged Darcy. While on holiday with her aunt and uncle in Derbyshire, she meets Darcy at his splendid estate, Pemberley, and finds that his snobbish behaviour has changed. Later, when Elizabeth's younger sister Lydia elopes with Wickham, Darcy arranges anonymously for Wickham to marry Lydia and to pay off all of Wickham's debts. Now very grateful to Darcy, Elizabeth assumes that she will never see him again.

Darcy admits to Bingley that he was wrong to intervene in his relationship with Jane and Bingley returns to Netherfield Hall to propose marriage to Jane, who delightedly accepts. Darcy accompanies him. By this time, both Elizabeth and Darcy have overcome their prejudices against each other and abandoned the pride that had stopped them expressing their true feelings for one another. The novel ends with the marriages of Elizabeth and Darcy and of Jane and Bingley. Mrs Bennet is satisfied and the novel's opening words seem to have been proved true.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

elopes runs away secretly in order to get married

prejudices preconceived judgements or opinion that are not based on facts or experience, usually leading to dislike or hostility

ACTIVITY 1

A01

SKILLS ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, COLLABORATION

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

One of the ways in which Austen presents her characters is through dialogue. Choose any two characters and, focusing directly on what they say (and how you think they say it), show what aspects of their personality emerge from their words. If working with a partner, take two different characters and compare your findings, checking whether you agree with each other's conclusions.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

dialogue conversation between two or more people

CHARACTERS

GENERAL VOCABULARY

romantically inclined interested in, in a romantic way

MR FITZWILLIAM DARCY

- romantically inclined towards Elizabeth Bennet
- proud, prejudiced, arrogant and sometimes rude
- loyal
- stubborn
- handsome, intelligent, rich and socially well-connected
- a kind master to his servants
- often awkward
- a loving brother
- prepared to admit that he has been wrong and to change
- the owner of Pemberley, said to be one of the most beautiful estates in England

MR BINGLEY

- romantically inclined towards Jane Bennet
- good-natured and friendly
- easily led by the opinions of others
- eager to please
- Darcy's oldest friend
- the wealthy occupant of Netherfield Hall
- someone who always sees the best in people

JANE BENNET

- the eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs Bennet
- romantically inclined towards Mr Bingley
- calm and collected
- someone who wants the best for everyone and sees the best in everyone
- the most beautiful of the Bennet sisters
- incapable of nastiness or deception
- very close to Elizabeth
- someone who does not easily show her feelings

ELIZABETH BENNET

- the second daughter of Mr and Mrs Bennet
- romantically inclined towards Mr Darcy
- impulsive
- intelligent, witty and full of energy and determination
- Mr Bennet's favourite daughter
- loving and loyal
- stubborn and sometimes both proud and prejudiced
- idealistic about love and marriage
- independent in her views

KITTY BENNET

- the fourth Bennet sister
- often caught in the middle of her family discussions
- influenced by Lydia
- similar to Lydia, but not her mother's favourite

MRS BENNET

- desperate for her five daughters to marry wealthy men to secure financially stable futures for them
- likes being the centre of attention
- melodramatic
- tactless and ill-mannered
- foolish

GENERAL VOCABULARY

melodramatic becoming more angry or upset than is really necessary

tactless not careful about saying or doing something that could upset others

ill-mannered not polite and behaving badly in social situations

MARY BENNET

- the third Bennet sister
- described as ‘the only plain one in the family’
- said to be the possessor of ‘neither genius nor taste’
- eager to show off her achievements
- sometimes seen as an embarrassment to the other sisters
- has quite strict ideas about moral behaviour

LYDIA BENNET

- the youngest Bennet sister and Mrs Bennet’s favourite daughter
- a ‘determined flirt’
- pretty, but very silly and impulsive
- only 15 years old
- obsessed with army officers, whose presence in Meryton influence her greatly

MR BENNET

- the father of five daughters
- **sharp-witted** and sometimes **sarcastic**
- closest to Elizabeth, of all his daughters
- intolerant of foolishness and childishness
- quiet and studious
- rather unhappily married to Mrs Bennet
- enjoys staying in his study as a **retreat**

GEORGE WICKHAM

- son of the property manager of Darcy’s father
- one of the officers in the Meryton regiment
- easy-going and charming
- a **gambler** who has got into debt
- **deceitful**
- the lover of Lydia Bennet, whom he marries after receiving a financial settlement

GEORGIANA DARCY

- Darcy’s younger sister
- extremely pretty
- very shy
- very musical
- naively falls for Wickham’s charm and nearly elopes with him
- devoted to her brother

GENERAL VOCABULARY

sharp-witted able to think and react very quickly

sarcastic saying things that are the opposite of what you mean, usually in order to make an unkind joke or to show that you are annoyed

retreat a place you can go to that is quiet or safe

gambler a person who risks money or possessions on the result of something, such as a card game or a race, when they do not know for certain what the result will be

deceitful someone who tells lies in order to get what they want

GENERAL VOCABULARY

domineering	tries to control other people without considering their feelings or ideas
sickly	weak, unhealthy and often ill
for the sake of	done because you want to do it and not for any particular reason

LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH

- a very wealthy lady
- the aunt of Mr Darcy
- the owner of the Rosings estate
- proud and obsessed with social standing
- controlling and **domineering**
- the patron of Mr Collins
- opposed to Darcy's interest in Elizabeth, believing him to be 'promised' to her **sickly** daughter

CAROLINE BINGLEY

- the sister of Mr Bingley
- very snobbish, rude, prejudiced and ill-mannered
- romantically inclined towards Mr Darcy
- jealous of Elizabeth

THE GARDINERS

- the aunt and uncle of the Bennet girls
- able to offer essential assistance after Lydia elopes with Wickham
- willing to be seen as the ones who gave Wickham the money to marry Lydia, in order to keep Darcy's help a secret
- closely involved in the developing relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth

CHARLOTTE LUCAS

- Elizabeth's best friend
- neither particularly pretty nor particularly rich
- 27 years old and unmarried at the start of the novel
- 'sensible' and unromantic about marriage
- the wife of Mr Collins after he has been turned down by Elizabeth

MR COLLINS

- the Bennets' cousin
- a vicar near Rosings (Lady Catherine de Bourgh's estate)
- the legal inheritor of Longbourn (the Bennets' estate)
- overly formal and very eager to please
- a comical figure who does the wrong thing in social situations
- keen to marry **for the sake of** being married
- thoughtless and lacking in Christian kindness and generosity
- prepared to change the target of his marriage proposal when Elizabeth turns him down

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Which characters display ‘pride’ and how does this affect their actions and relationships with others? List examples of statements by characters who show pride and also what Jane Austen, as narrator, says about them.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

THEMES

COURTSHIP, PROPOSALS AND MARRIAGE

Austen’s interest in the subject of marriage is shown in her study of the relationship between Mr and Mrs Bennet and also in the treatment of Mr Collins and Charlotte Lucas after she becomes his wife. However, even more of the novel focuses on the processes that take place before marriage: how and why men propose to women and how and why women respond to their proposals. This allows Austen to examine the place of marriage in society and a range of attitudes to marriage that are held by the different characters in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Austen contrasts marriages based on true love and romantic attachment with more practical or business-like propositions, such as the marriage of Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins. Charlotte’s attitude to marriage is best shown by the cynical comment: ‘Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance’. Because of her position as an unmarried woman in the early 19th century, Charlotte sees marriage as necessary in order to have a secure future and so feels that she cannot think too much about her choice of husband.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

cynical doubting whether something will happen or is really important

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

‘Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance’. List all of the different opinions on marriage in *Pride and Prejudice* that you can find and consider the differences between them. Why is the historical context of these opinions important in your understanding of the novel’s key theme?

LOVE

As well as marriages without love, *Pride and Prejudice* also examines the scandal of love without marriage. When Lydia runs off with her lover, Wickham, this results in terrible disgrace for the Bennet family, as relationships between unmarried people were highly disapproved of in 19th-century Britain. The situation is eventually resolved when Wickham marries Lydia. The case of Lydia and Wickham is contrasted with Austen’s examples of love leading more conventionally to successful marriages between Jane and Bingley, and Elizabeth and Darcy.

The novel also explores the love and loyalty that characters feel for their siblings. Part of the reason that Elizabeth takes such a strong dislike to Darcy is because of his part in separating Jane and Bingley. It is also significant that Elizabeth and the reader come to see that, despite his faults, Darcy is a loving and loyal brother to his younger sister, Georgiana.

▶ **Look closely at the relationship between Jane and Elizabeth during the course of the novel and write about its importance in the novel.**

▲ Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen as Elizabeth and Darcy in the film version of *Pride and Prejudice*

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

It is thought that the first draft of *Pride and Prejudice* was called *First Impressions*. However, the fact that Austen changed the title shows how important she thought these two undesirable qualities were in the lives of her characters. Pride, which is closely associated with the arrogance of wealth and class, is seen in several characters, but especially in Darcy. However, it could also be said that Elizabeth's pride is severely wounded by his initial attitude towards her, making it an important aspect of Elizabeth's character as well. The word 'prejudice' is nowadays associated particularly with discrimination and bias against other people because of matters such as their ethnic background, and this is called 'racial prejudice'. The word essentially means 'pre-judging' a person or event before having much evidence on which an opinion could be based and so it is linked to the idea of 'first impressions'. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen clearly set out to show that initial impressions can cloud people's judgement and make them unable to see a person's true qualities. This certainly applies to both of the novel's central characters.

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CLASS

Austen lived and wrote at a time when divisions between the different classes were considered to be very important and people largely associated only with people of their own class. When class boundaries were broken, things could become difficult, particularly if someone from the 'upper class' mixed with someone from the 'middle' or 'upper middle' classes; Austen clearly found this social difficulty very interesting.

The upper classes were the richest members of society. Their wealth came from owning a great deal of land that they inherited through their families at a time before the main impact of the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution then made many other people rich either by running their own businesses or by trading, but these people were looked down on by members of the landed aristocracy. For example, the wealthy Bingleys are not thought of by some as truly upper class, because their fortune had come from trade, so some of the landed aristocracy are snobbish and prejudiced towards them.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

cloud people's judgement	make someone less able to think clearly or make sensible decisions
landed aristocracy	the highest class in a society whose wealth comes from owning large amounts of land
gentleman	a man who has a good social position, usually based on his wealth
domestic	relating to the home or the family

Lady Catherine De Bourgh, in particular, represents the landed aristocracy's sense of superiority. She looks down on the Bennets, who clearly do not meet her social standards. Mr Collins's behaviour shows that the expectation was that such grand ladies should be treated in a very respectful way by members of the other classes. However, Elizabeth refuses to be overly impressed and silenced by Lady Catherine and her attitudes, as she knows that she, Elizabeth, is the daughter of a gentleman and a respectable family. Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen shows how society expected people to behave and how easy it was to do the 'wrong' thing in social situations.

▶ **Which qualities does Jane Austen seem to admire and which does she dislike in the society she portrays?**

AUTHOR'S CRAFT

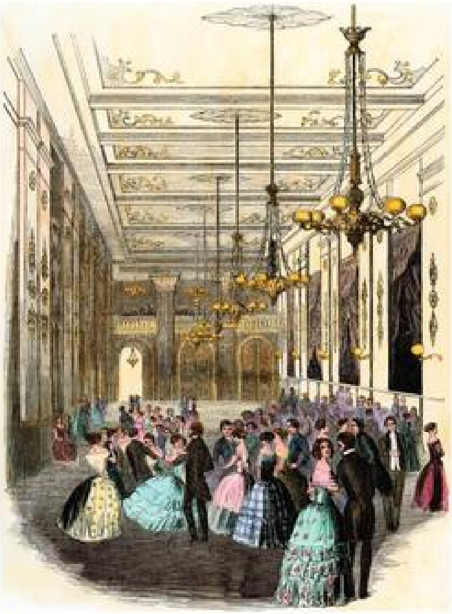
SETTING

A notable feature of Austen's writing is her use of interior 'domestic' settings: scenes take place in ballrooms, drawing rooms and other rooms in houses. These houses are not exclusively grand country houses, either: they include normal family houses such as the Bennets' house. In a novel with so many female characters, most of whom are part of the same family, it is inevitable that much of the action and speaking takes place indoors, as the main activities of women in the 18th and 19th centuries took place indoors.

▶ **Make a list of the settings in *Pride and Prejudice*. What do you think is their significance?**

However, the novel's setting is not limited to interiors and there are notable outdoor scenes. Elizabeth in particular is keen on getting outside and, in one incident, walks to Netherfield to see Jane, who is sick. This scene is of interest because of other people's reactions to this behaviour and the muddy hem of her dress. It shows Elizabeth's independence and unwillingness to be trapped by social convention and it also outlines the shock that this causes to the conservative attitudes of the upper classes.

Austen also broadens the scope of *Pride and Prejudice* by including journeys, both within the local area and other parts of the country, such as Elizabeth's journey to Pemberley or the journey to locate Lydia and Wickham after their elopement. These journeys add interest and variety, and prevent *Pride and Prejudice* from being entirely trapped in the small local world of Longbourn and Meryton. Indeed, Lydia's choice to elope with Wickham may in part suggest a desire to escape these restrictions.


▲ A ballroom typical of the early 1800s

ACTIVITY 3 **A01** **SKILLS** REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Go through the novel and make a record of who goes where and why. Then focus on Elizabeth's journey to Pemberley and write about the way Austen sets up the meeting between Elizabeth and Darcy and its importance to their relationship.

OBSERVATION OF PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

Austen is admired particularly for the accurate and sometimes unforgiving way in which she observes and portrays her characters and their behaviour. Through her narrative voice, her description of her characters and their dialogue, Austen expresses her own opinions and judgements of these people. The accuracy of her observations of human nature also ensures that the characters she describes in her novels are memorable and are still recognisable, even today. These qualities may help to explain why, over 200 years after they were written, her novels are still so popular, especially when turned into films and television adaptations.

NARRATIVE VOICES

Austen is clearly the omniscient narrator of her novels. She controls the events and comments on them, both directly in the third-person narrative voice and indirectly through the speech and opinions of her characters. She employs different narrative devices to move the action forward, especially the use of letters at various points to show characters' reactions and attitudes in their 'own' words. She also uses irony in her comments and descriptions, right from the start of the novel.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

omniscient knowing everything within the world of the novel or play, including the secrets of all the characters and what the future holds

narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

third person using the third person – that is, 'he', 'she' and 'it'; this differs from the first person ('I') and the second person, which directly addresses the reader ('you')

irony using words to convey a meaning that is completely opposite to their apparent meaning

ACTIVITY 4

A01

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Find all the letters throughout the novel. Check that you know what they say, what they tell you about the writers and what their effect is on the characters receiving them. Think about the differences in tone and style. Then choose one letter and write notes about its significance in relation to theme, plot and character. (You may wish to choose Darcy's letter to Elizabeth or the letter from Mr Collins to Mr Bennet before visiting him.) Copy and complete the table with some key phrases, writing a comment on their significance.

▼ KEY PHRASE	▼ SIGNIFICANCE
Mr Collins's letter to Mr Bennet: 'I feel it my duty to promote and establish the blessing of peace in all families within the reach of my influence.'	This shows Mr Collins to speak in a very long-winded way, being full of himself, self-righteous and patronising.

LANGUAGE

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

sympathetic applied to a character in fiction, this means a character who is liked by the reader or other characters

GENERAL VOCABULARY

hypocritical behaving in a way that is different from what you claim to believe

taken at face value accepted without thinking there may be a hidden meaning

TONE OF VOICE

You have seen how important tone of voice is when considering what the characters say. This is also true in the narrative of the text. As *Pride and Prejudice* is narrated by a third-person omniscient narrator, the narrator's tone of voice shapes the reader's opinions of characters and situations.

HUMOUR AND IRONY

The device that Austen uses most to introduce humour into her novels is irony. It is used most often to make the reader laugh at the foolish or **hypocritical** ways of the characters in her novels. Austen uses some of her more **sympathetic** characters to make similar points to those made by her omniscient narrative voice, notably Mr Bennet and Elizabeth, who share an ironic sense of humour. The reader realises that sentiments expressed in Austen's novels cannot be **taken at face value** and that they often carry the opposite meaning to that which they apparently have. It is important to look out for examples of irony when reading *Pride and Prejudice*, especially when they laugh at characters' weaknesses, as they are important to an overall understanding of the novel. The fact that the very first sentence of the novel is heavily ironic should alert the reader to what will happen.

▶ **Think about the way in which Mr Bennet reacts to his life in a house with so many women. How sympathetic do you think Jane Austen wishes the reader to be towards him?**

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A01 **A02** **A04**

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your response.

1 Explore the relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Charlotte Lucas in *Pride and Prejudice*. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 marks)**

2 To what extent is the topic of either 'pride' or 'prejudice' the key theme of the novel? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 marks)**

3 How does Austen present the character of Mrs Bennet? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 marks)**

4 How is male friendship presented in *Pride and Prejudice*? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 To what extent is *Pride and Prejudice* a novel about social class and money? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 **Pride and Prejudice is a social comedy[1] that observes the significance of social class and money in the Regency 'marriage market'[2]. In a time when it was rare to marry for love, Austen observes the 'problem' that the Bennetts have in finding husbands for their five daughters. The Bennetts are lower middle class, and risk financial ruin if their daughters cannot find good matches.**

Mr Bingley is seen as a good match for Jane because of his high social standing and fortune. He is presented as a friendly character who does not take notice of social differences. On meeting Jane and her sisters at a modest country ball, he remarks that 'I have never met with so many pleasant girls in my life'. This is in direct contrast to his sister Caroline, and Mr Darcy.[3]

[1] A01: This comments shows an understanding of genre and the text as a whole.

[2] A04: This phrase shows a good understanding of the context of the novel.

[3] A01: This comment begins to show knowledge of these characters. How could you explore this point further?

OTHER MEDIA

- Film: *Pride and Prejudice*, Joe Wright, 2005.
- Television: *Pride and Prejudice*, Simon Langton, BBC, 1995.
- Book: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith, 2009.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS
CHARLES DICKENS

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Great Expectations was the penultimate completed work that Charles Dickens published. It was written at a particularly troubled time in Dickens's life. His mother was seriously ill, he had recently separated from his wife and his brother died just as the novel was being published. These difficulties can be seen in *Great Expectations* as it is one of the darkest of all Dickens's novels. There are several striking parallels between Dickens's life and the character of Pip that might suggest that this novel is partly autobiographical. Like Pip, Dickens had also worked as a manual labourer when he was young and he did not like the work and wanted to improve his life. Dickens later worked as a law clerk and, when he was a young man, he was rejected by a woman of higher social standing, much like Pip is rejected by Estella.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

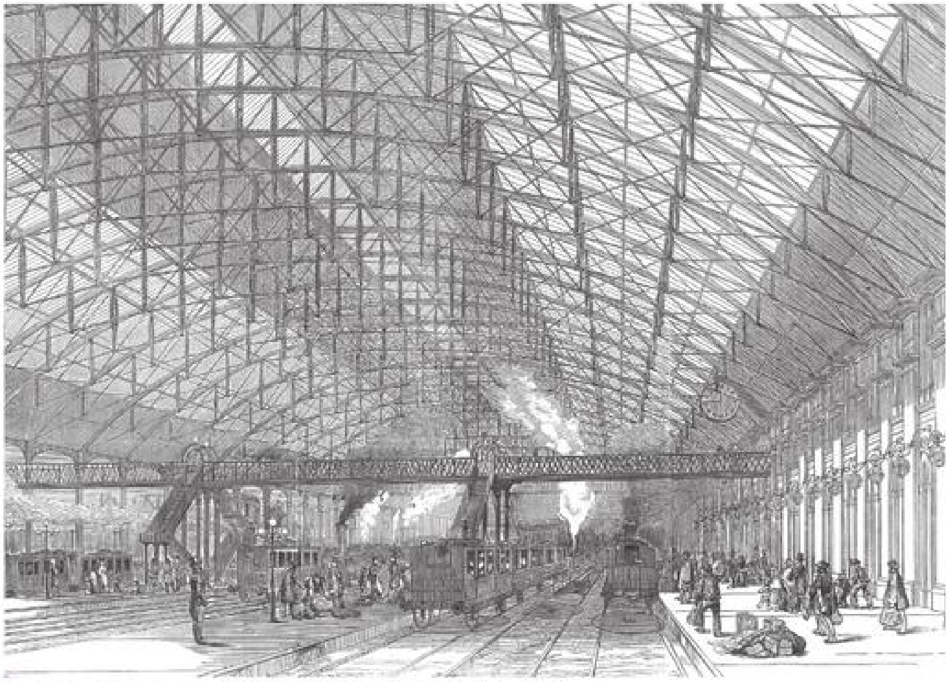
autobiographical relating to a person's own life (in this case, Dickens's life)

GENERAL VOCABULARY

penultimate the second to last
clerk a secretary or assistant with administrative duties or a legal official in charge of the records of a court
sophisticated complex or having a lot of worldly experience and knowledge

Great Expectations also contains many features that are shared by Dickens's other novels. This includes a complex and sophisticated plot with many different interlinking parts and a set of striking and memorable characters. Themes of *Great Expectations* include childhood, poverty, crime, the legal system and the opposition between a person's inner worth and outer appearance. All of these are typical of Dickens's novels more broadly. *Great Expectations* also closely relates to the context of the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution was a major event happening in England at the time, which involved the rise of industrial factories, manufacturing and new forms of transport such as the railways. The context of the Industrial Revolution can be seen particularly in the way that *Great Expectations* represents the relationship between the aristocratic classes, the middle class of businessmen and lawyers and the lower classes of manual labourers.

Another important feature of *Great Expectations* is its two endings. Originally, Dickens wrote an 'unhappy' ending in which Estella remarries and leaves Pip behind. He later changed this ending to a 'happy' one that suggests that Pip and Estella will marry. This is the standard version used today. It is interesting to think about why Dickens made this change, and how it changes your understanding of the novel.



▲ A Victorian steam train, typical of the Industrial Revolution

▶ **Why do so many characters struggle to speak or to read language in *Great Expectations*?**

PLOT

GENERAL VOCABULARY

orphan	a child whose parents have died
convict	someone who has been proved to be guilty of a crime and sent to prison
blacksmith	someone who makes and repairs things made of iron, especially horseshoes
ward	someone who is under the legal protection of another person or of a law court
suitor	a man who wants to marry a particular woman
apprentice	someone who works for an employer for a fixed period of time in order to learn a particular skill or job
benefactor	someone that gives money to another person or cause

While looking at his parents' gravestones, the orphan Pip is approached by an escaped convict, Magwitch, who forces Pip to steal food for him as well as a tool to saw himself free from his leg iron. Pip steals the food and a file from his home where he lives with his abusive sister and her husband Joe Gargery, the local blacksmith. He returns them to Magwitch, but Magwitch is soon caught fighting with another convict and recaptured.

Through his foolish Uncle Pumblechook, Pip is asked to come to the house of a local aristocrat, Miss Havisham, who wants a boy to play with her ward, Estella. Pip visits the strange and eccentric Miss Havisham's home, Satis House, many times, being attracted to her wealth and to the beautiful Estella, although she insults Pip for being common. On one of the visits Pip fights with 'the pale young gentleman', another young suitor of Estella's. Pip expects that Miss Havisham plans to raise him as a gentleman and husband to Estella and is disappointed when she instead allows him to become Joe's apprentice.

Pip works as Joe's apprentice, but he is unsatisfied with the humble life. His dream of advancement is answered when a lawyer called Mr Jaggers arrives, saying that a secret benefactor wishes to pay for Pip to move to London and become a gentleman. Pip assumes that the benefactor is Miss Havisham, even though no one will confirm this. This section of the novel also introduces Orlick, Joe's other apprentice, who hates Pip and attacks Mrs Joe Gargery so violently that she can no longer speak; the sweet and caring Biddy moves in to the blacksmith's house to help care for Mrs Joe.

In London, Pip becomes friends with Herbert Pocket, who turns out to have been the pale young gentleman. Matthew Pocket, Herbert's father, helps Pip, Herbert, and two other boys train as gentlemen. Pip lives the life of a young gentleman, spending money lavishly, joining a club of rich and brutish men and being embarrassed when Joe, with his common habits, comes to visit him. Miss Havisham asks Pip to accompany Estella as she moves to London and Pip becomes more convinced that she intends for them to be together. He becomes increasingly upset as Estella becomes involved with Bentley Drummle, a particularly unpleasant member of Pip's club and another of Matthew Pocket's students. Pip's sister dies and, although he returns for the funeral, he feels uncomfortable and guilty with Joe and Biddy. During this stage of the novel Pip also becomes friends with John Wemmick, Jaggers's clerk, overcoming his first impression that Wemmick was as ill-tempered as Jaggers himself.

The key turning point is when Magwitch arrives at Pip's apartment and reveals that he was Pip's benefactor, using money he made after being deported to Australia. Magwitch is sentenced to death if he returns to England, but has taken the risk to see 'his gentleman'. It is revealed that the other convict, named Compeyson, was Magwitch's partner-in-crime and tricked Magwitch into unfairly receiving the heavier sentence. The reader also learns that it was Compeyson who abandoned Miss Havisham at the altar, leading to her madness. Although Pip is horrified, he sees it as his duty to help Magwitch escape. Pip learns that Estella is engaged to Drummle. He confronts Miss Havisham, leaving full of regret. She later commits suicide by setting her wedding dress on fire. Pip is attacked and nearly killed by Orlick.

Pip's plan to save Magwitch is stopped because Compeyson has already informed the police. During Magwitch's capture, Compeyson drowns. Magwitch dies in prison with Pip caring for him, after it is revealed that Magwitch is Estella's father. Pip himself falls ill and is imprisoned for not paying his debts. He is only saved by Joe coming to tend to him and paying his debts. Pip returns to the blacksmith's workshop to find that Joe and Biddy are getting married. This frustrates his own plan to propose to Biddy, but he realises that he does not deserve her and that Joe does. Pip leaves to work abroad, returning much older and wiser and, in a concluding scene, apparently reunites with Estella.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

lavishly	extravagantly or luxuriously
brutish	violent
ill-tempered	grumpy
altar	a table or similar feature in a church used in religious ceremonies; to be 'left at the altar' means that, at the moment of the planned marriage ceremony, one partner does not turn up
confronts	accuses someone of doing something, especially by showing them the proof

CHARACTERS

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

protagonist	the main character in a piece of literature

GENERAL VOCABULARY

redeemed	done something that will improve what other people think of you, after behaving badly or failing
remorse	feelings of regret for wrongdoing
deception	lying

PIP

- the protagonist of *Great Expectations*
- excessively ambitious and wants a gentlemanly life
- ungrateful towards Joe and Biddy
- irresponsible; he acquires large debts
- partly redeemed, through his love for Magwitch and feelings of remorse towards Joe
- by the end of the novel Pip seems to have come to a full understanding of himself and of life

MR JAGGERS

- the lawyer who acts on behalf of Pip's benefactor
- cruel and cold; he participates in Pip's deception, although there are hints of regret during his final conversations with Pip

▲ Helena Bonham Carter as Miss Havisham

GENERAL VOCABULARY

banished sent away permanently from their country or the area where they live, especially as an official punishment

marshes areas of low flat ground that are always wet and soft

unaffected not changed by something

ESTELLA

- the ward of Miss Havisham
- later revealed to be the daughter of Magwitch and Mr Jaggers's housekeeper
- a mirror of Pip's character; she leads an aristocratic life, but has secret lower-class origins
- cruel to Pip and other men, but like Pip she is punished for her flaws through her marriage to Drummle
- deliberately made cruel and heartless by Miss Havisham

MISS HAVISHAM

- was abandoned at the altar as a young woman, causing her to shut herself in her mansion, stopping all the clocks and wearing only her slowly decaying wedding dress
- manipulates Estella to break Pip's heart in revenge on men, damaging both of their lives
- cruelly allows Pip to believe that she is his benefactor
- pays for her sins through her suffering and, like Pip, she reaches a point of remorse and understanding about what she has done

ABEL MAGWITCH

- a criminal **banished** to Australia who secretly funds Pip's training as a gentleman
- attempts to live out his own desires through a child
- brutish
- unfairly tricked into a long sentence by Compeyson
- refuses to tell the authorities about Pip when he is captured on the **marshes**
- flawed, but ultimately a good man

JOE GARGERY

- probably the one entirely good character in *Great Expectations*
- always genuine, caring and honest.
- lacks the manners to mix with the upper-class characters; Pip learns that this is insignificant compared to his inner moral worth
- described, like Miss Havisham, as being a fixed personality who is **unaffected** by the passage of time

BENTLEY DRUMMLE

- an aristocratic equivalent of Orlick; he is violent, rude, and Pip's direct competitor
- violent towards Estella, causing her to leave him

ORLICK

- Joe's other apprentice besides Pip
- violent, aggressive and brutish
- resentful of both Pip and Mrs Joe; he physically attacks both of them during the novel

HERBERT POCKET

- one of the Pocket family
- Pip's companion, friend and helper

MRS JOE

- Pip's sister and Joe's wife
- abusive towards Pip and Joe; she browbeats both of them, inflicting feelings of guilt on Pip
- greatly weakened after being attacked by Orlick

BIDDY

- a simple but honest and worthy character
- often acts as Pip's conscience and, although she marries Joe, Pip realises that he should have considered her as a potential wife rather than following Estella and a gentlemanly life

JOHN WEMMICK

- Jaggers's clerk
- cold and unfriendly in his office
- warm and hospitable at home, he also helps Pip with Magwitch's escape attempt

COMPEYSON

- a fraudster who ruined the lives of both Miss Havisham and Magwitch
- the clearest demonstration in the novel that gentlemanly qualities and wealth are worthless without inner morality and goodness

MR PUMBLECHOOK

- a pompous and hypocritical friend of Mrs Joe's
- responsible for introducing Pip to Miss Havisham

GENERAL VOCABULARY

resentful	feeling bitterness towards someone or something
companion	someone with whom you spend a lot of time and/or travel with
browbeats	tries to make someone do something, especially in a threatening way
conscience	a sense of right and wrong
fraudster	a person guilty of deception for financial or personal gain
hypocritical	behaving in a way that is different from what you claim to believe

ACTIVITY 1 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, COLLABORATION

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Work in pairs, with one person listing all the characteristics of the old Pip who narrates *Great Expectations* and one person listing the characteristics of the young Pip who experiences the events in the story. Compare your lists, copying and completing the table by pairing shared and opposing qualities with each other.

▼ OLD PIP	▼ YOUNG PIP
Loving	Loving
Content with status	Ambitious

THEMES

GENERAL VOCABULARY

recklessness the state of not caring or worrying about the possible bad or dangerous results of your actions
pretension the attempt of people to act more grandly than they really are, or to act more grandly than their origins allow
privilege advantage granted to certain people

MONEY

At times, money is associated with bad qualities such as greed, in the case of the Pocket family's greed for Miss Havisham's wealth, and recklessness, as when Pip piles up huge debts. Money is associated with aristocratic characters who have not earned it and do not do anything productive with it. This is part of Dickens's critique of the aristocratic class that was being challenged in Victorian society by a middle class who made their money through work and investment. Money can also be a force for good, particularly when it is earned (like the money Joe uses to pay off Pip's debts), or when it is productively invested. For example, Miss Havisham is able to partially redeem herself by investing in Herbert Pocket's business and it is this business which Pip works for at the end of the novel. When workers and businessmen create money and use it productively, Dickens presents it in a positive light.

CLASS AND ORIGINS

The theme of class is closely tied to that of wealth and money. The novel is very critical of pretension. This can be seen not only in Pip's ambition to become a gentleman, but also in the characters of Mr Pumblechook, Mrs Joe and the Pocket family, who are all presented as being foolish or unpleasant because they act above their position in society. Joe, on the other hand, is presented almost entirely positively because he makes no attempt at all to hide his common origins. You should notice that Pip's key moment happens when it is revealed that the origins of his wealth lie not in the aristocratic privilege of Miss Havisham, but in the hard labour that Magwitch has done in Australia. *Great Expectations* also has a very negative presentation of the aristocratic class. For example, the fact that Miss Havisham is a faded and deteriorated force detached from the rest of society serves as a metaphor for the position of the aristocratic class. The character of Compeyson is used to demonstrate that a gentlemanly outer appearance often masks a lack of inner worth and goodness. Both with Miss Havisham and at Magwitch's trial, he gains advantage by tricking people into thinking he is good because of his good manners and upbringing.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

metaphor describing something by comparing it to an image which it resembles, in a way that says the object *is* the image

GENERAL VOCABULARY

immigration when a person or people move to a different place or foreign country
thriving very successful
uninhabited a place where no one lives
nostalgia longing for a remembered past

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbolism using symbols to represent particular concepts or ideas

THE CITY AND THE COUNTRY

Dickens is famous for being the greatest writer of and about the city of London and *Great Expectations* is no exception to this. Its representation of London as a place of constant activity and noise, where many different people from different social backgrounds co-exist side-by-side, is familiar from his other novels. It also reflects the changes that London was undergoing during the late stages of the industrial revolution, when there was much immigration to the city and many businesses and factories were rapidly developing. However, *Great Expectations* is also organised in part around the opposition between the city and the country. While London is vast, thriving and ever-changing, the Kent marshes where Joe lives are largely uninhabited, unchanging and characterised by modest, traditional activities like blacksmithing. This opposition is expressed most clearly in the character of John Wemmick, who is cold, proud and business-like at work, but who becomes increasingly warm and friendly as he walks out of the centre of the city towards his domestic life at home. This feature of Wemmick's character is used to symbolise the difference between spaces inside and outside the centre of London.

MEMORY AND THE PAST

Great Expectations uses many ideas related to time. It is interested in characters who seem to exist outside of the passage of time, like Miss Havisham or Joe, who is described as being an eternal child. It is also interested in characters like Pip who change a great deal over time and who have a sense of sadness because they are unable to recover their past selves. Childhood, and the nostalgia for childhood innocence, are also important themes here. There is a particularly beautiful passage at the end of the first book, where Pip looks back on his childhood and cries at the memory of being 'so innocent and little there'. You should also notice how Dickens uses two different Pips to create this sense of nostalgia: the adult Pip who appears at the end looking back on his youth and narrating the story and the young Pip who is the protagonist of the story.

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING, COLLABORATION, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Work with a partner and copy and complete the table, adding brief definitions to each class category. Next, each of you separately place each character in a category. Make a note of characters who fall into more than one social class. Compare your list with your partner's. Do you agree with each other?

Next discuss which features characterise the characters from each social class. Can you see any patterns where particular features attach to particular social classes?

▼ ARISTOCRATIC	▼ *QUALITIES*	▼ BUSINESS	▼ *QUALITIES*	▼ WORKING	▼ *QUALITIES*
Miss Havisham	Old, decayed, deceptive	Mr Jaggers	Harsh, cold, business-like	Joe	Honest, simple, unchanging
Pip (middle of novel)	Snobbish, careless with money	Pip (end of novel)	Settled, at peace, knowledgeable	Pip (start of novel)	Innocent, guilty, long-suffering

AUTHOR'S CRAFT

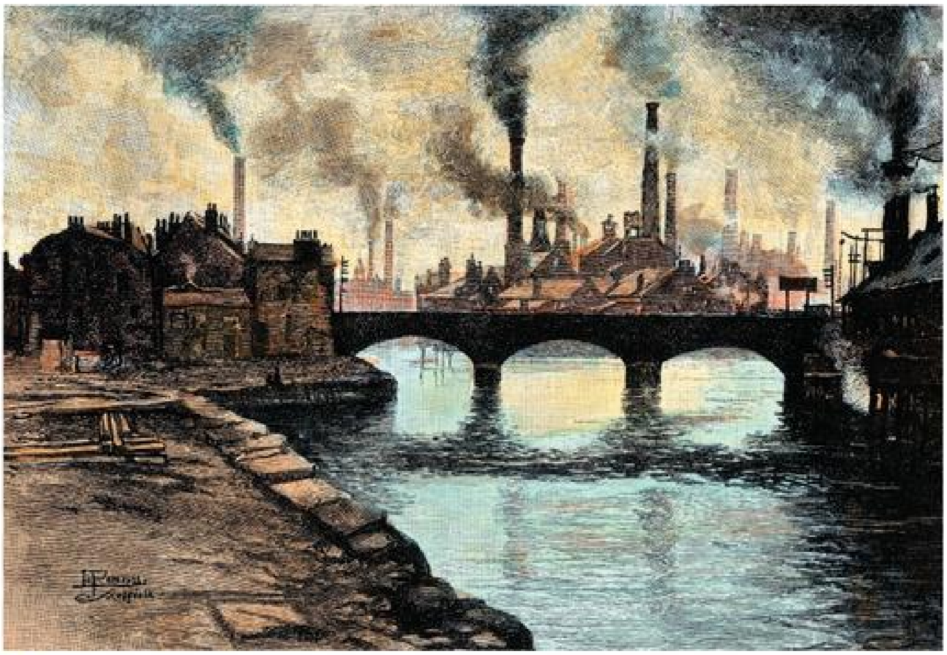
THE *BILDUNGSROMAN*

Great Expectations is an example of a novel that can be described as a coming of age story or *bildungsroman* as it is called in German. This means a novel of personal development. A *bildungsroman* usually follows an individual from childhood to early adulthood, seeing them grow from immaturity into mature, fully-grown adults. The *bildungsroman* also often focuses on a single, dramatic moment when the central character suddenly realises the errors they have made; this realisation allows them to move forwards into adulthood. This moment is described using the ancient Greek word *anagorisis*. With Pip, this happens when he realises that Magwitch is his benefactor. However, Dickens also changes the form of the *bildungsroman* to make it darker. For example, a *bildungsroman* would usually end with the protagonist about to start a happy adult life, usually through marriage. Dickens ends with a much older Pip who is not completely happy and only hints that he may marry Estella in the future.

DOUBLES AND OPPOSITES

Great Expectations is built around doubles, mirror images and oppositions. First Orlick and then Bentley Drummle serve as mirror-images of Pip. They both share Pip's desires and position: Orlick is also an apprentice who desires advancement and Drummle is also a young gentleman who desires Estella. In some ways, Joe and Miss Havisham are mirror-images of each other, as they are both described as being unchanging and unaffected by the passage of time.

In comparison, the happy Wemmick at home is the opposite of the cold, business-like Wemmick at the office. This use of oppositions also works at the level of theme. You have seen already the opposition between the city and the country, but there are other important examples. One is the opposition between love and friendship. While relationships based on friendship are generally seen as honest, pure and positive, like Pip's friendship with Joe or with Herbert, relationships based on romantic love are often destructive and full of secrets, for example, Pip's relationship with Estella or Miss Havisham's with Compeyson.



▲ Chimneys of steel factories in Sheffield, England, in the 1800s

ACTIVITY 3 **A01** **A02** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, REASONING

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Make a list of all the moments in *Great Expectations* where things or people are placed alongside their opposite. For each one provide a reason why Dickens uses this effect. Here is an example to get you started:

'Bentley Drummle is the opposite of Pip because Drummle is violent and rough towards Estella while Pip is caring and loving. This is done to highlight the purity of Pip's love for Estella.'

LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

onomatopoeia where a word sounds like the noise it makes
pun an amusing use of a word or phrase that has two meanings, or of words that have the same sound but different meanings
symbol in literature, people, objects or events that have a meaning other than their literal meaning

GENERAL VOCABULARY

make a name become famous for something
coarse rough and slightly hard

LANGUAGE

Dickens is a master at naming his characters and often uses names to reflect the characters' inner natures. The name 'Jaggers' sounds hard and cruel, while the name 'Pumblechook' sounds silly and complicated, both of which reflect their characters. This effect is called onomatopoeia. Indeed, naming is an important theme of *Great Expectations*. The very first thing Dickens shows the reader is Pip failing to pronounce his own name, making 'nothing longer or more explicit than Pip' with his tongue. Throughout the novel, Pip will be given many names ('Handel', 'my gentleman', 'the prowling boy'). You might think that Dickens is playing with words here: by trying to become a gentleman Pip is also trying to 'make a name' for himself in the world, just as he tries to 'make a name' for himself at the start while reading his parents' gravestones. The name Pip can also be seen as a pun, as 'pip' is another word for seed, suggesting that Pip is a character who needs to grow and mature over time. Characters being unable to speak is also an important theme. Mrs Joe, for example, has her tongue cut out and cannot talk, while Joe constantly struggles to speak in the presence of upper-class characters.

HANDS

Hands are one of the most important symbols in *Great Expectations*. Hands are highlighted repeatedly throughout the novel: Mr Jaggers continually washes his hands; Estella points out Pip's 'coarse hands'; Jaggers shows off the scarred hands of his servant who is also Estella's mother; when Magwitch reappears to Pip, he is holding out his hands; and Pip is 'brought up by hand'. Hands represent things about character, for example Mr Jaggers washing his hands symbolises his guilt and desire to wash away his sin, whereas Pip and Joe's coarse hands symbolise their working class background. Hands are also used to represent themes, with Pip being 'brought up by hand' symbolising his guilt over his origins. In this way, hands can be linked to many of the themes of the novel, including those discussed above.

ACTIVITY 4 **A01** **A02** **SKILLS** REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Make a list of all the times that hands are mentioned in *Great Expectations*. For each reference to hands that you find, draw a link to a wider theme of the novel or show how it expresses a trait of one of the characters, or how it functions in the plot. Here is an example to get you started.

'Mr Jaggers washes his hands often. This represents his attempt to symbolically wash his sins from himself.'

GENERAL VOCABULARY

trait a particular quality in someone's character

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A01 **A02** **A04**

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your response.

1 'Mrs Joe is an unpleasant but sympathetic character'. Compare and contrast the presentation of Mrs Joe with another character. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 Marks)**

2 Explore the significance of hands in *Great Expectations*. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 Marks)**

3 In what ways has Pip learned to accept friendship over romantic love at the end of *Great Expectations*? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 Marks)**

4 How is Pip's childhood guilt presented in the novel? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 Marks)**

5 What is the role of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 Marks)**

5 **Miss Havisham's ghost-like appearance makes her one of the most memorable characters in *Great Expectations*.[1] When Pip first meets her, he remarks that she is 'the strangest lady I have ever seen'. He observes that she is dressed as a bride, but that 'the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose had shrunk to skin and bone'. The vivid description 'skin and bone' creates a startling image of an aged bride, setting a gothic atmosphere[2], further intensified by the strange things she says to Pip. She declares that she has a 'sick fancy' to see a child play, and that she is bored of grown men and women. The choice of adjective 'sick' suggests she is mentally unstable[3], and is further confirmed with the eccentric repetition of the imperative verb[4], 'Play! Play! Play!'**

[1] A01: This opening sentence shows a good awareness of the text as a whole.

[2] A04: 'Gothic' is a literary genre, usually combining horror, death and sometimes romance. The contrast between the romance of a wedding dress and Miss Havisham's withered appearance hints at this genre.

[3] A02: A good way of demonstrating understanding of the writer's language is to select a key word from a longer quotation and explore its specific effect.

[4] An imperative verb gives an instruction.

STRETCH YOUR THINKING

Discuss the significance of foreign locations in the novel.

OTHER MEDIA

- The Dickens Fellowship (website)

Great Expectations has been adapted numerous times for television, film and the theatre including the following productions.

- Theatre: a 2005 adaptation by the Royal Shakespeare Company, directed by Declan Donnellan.
- *Fitoor*: this 2016 Indian film is a Hindi-language adaptation, written by Abhishek Kapoor and Supratik Sen and directed by Abhishek Kapoor.
- *Great Expectations: The Untold Story*: this 1986 film shows the adventure of Magwitch in Australia.

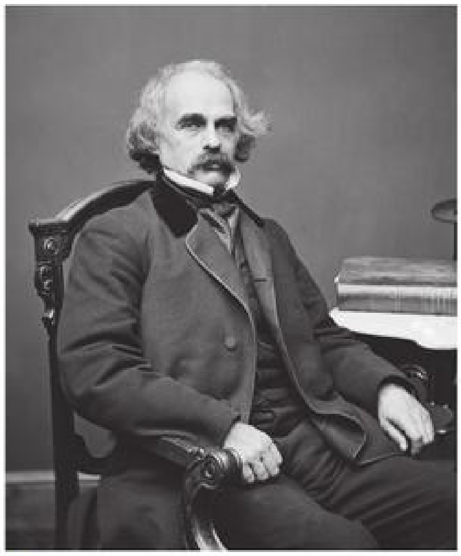
THE SCARLET LETTER
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Scarlet Letter was published in 1850, but it is set 200 years earlier among a group of people called the Puritans. During the 17th century, the Puritans travelled from England to settle on the east coast of America, in an area now called New England. Puritan life was defined by a strict set of Christian morals and rules and by the need to establish a working civilisation in the relatively wild and natural landscape of America. These themes appear in Hawthorne's representation of Puritan life in *The Scarlet Letter.*

The Puritans are significant in American history because they established many aspects of American life as it was lived during the 19th century, when Hawthorne lived and wrote. In fact, in many ways, they established many aspects of modern American life as it continues to be lived today. This means that looking back at the Puritans is often a way in which writers like Hawthorne can examine the present day, whether that present day was in the 19th or 20th century. Although *The Scarlet Letter* is set 200 years before the time Hawthorne wrote it, he uses a representation of the politics and morality of the Puritans to reflect on the political and social issues that defined his own time. These include the political divisions and the disagreements over how best to organise society; these led to the American Civil War, which broke out ten years after *The Scarlet Letter* was published.

Hawthorne's representation of Puritanism, as well as other aspects of *The Scarlet Letter*, relate to his own background. Hawthorne's family history could be traced all the way back to the Puritan immigrants of the 17th century. He was born and spent much of his life in Salem, which is close to the setting of *The Scarlet Letter*, Boston. The introductory section of the novel, entitled 'The Custom-House', is particularly autobiographical. Like the narrator of 'The Custom-House', Hawthorne had worked in the Salem custom-house when he needed money and, like the narrator, he also lost his job due to changes in the politics governing the city. It is interesting to think about the ways in which this autobiographical element relates to *The Scarlet Letter* as a whole.


▲ Nathaniel Hawthorne

GENERAL VOCABULARY

Puritans a group of English people who were part of the Protestant denomination of the Christian church; they typically had very strict religious views on morality, especially sexuality
background someone's upbringing, family history and childhood experiences

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

autobiographical relating to a person's own life (in this case, Hawthorne's life)
narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

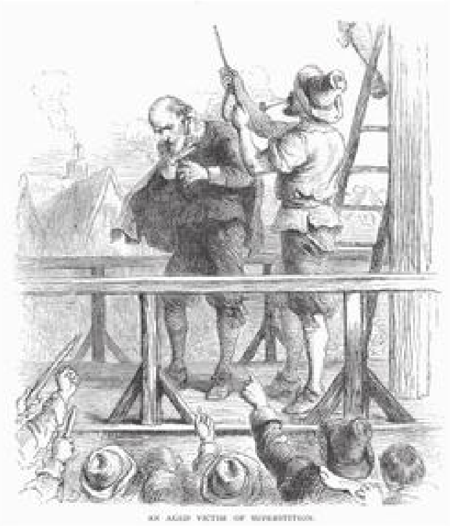
GENERAL VOCABULARY

Native Americans	different groups of native people who lived in North America and South America before the arrival of European settlers

- **Research Nathaniel Hawthorne's life and identify any events that you think may have influenced him when he was writing *The Scarlet Letter*. How useful do you think it is to consider the writer's own life when thinking about the stories that they write?**

- **There are several moments where Native Americans, who lived in New England before the arrival of the Puritans, appear or are mentioned in *The Scarlet Letter*. Find these moments and think about what purpose they serve in the novel.**

PLOT


AN AGED VICTIM OF SUPERSTITION.

▲ A public scaffold

The Scarlet Letter begins with a section entitled 'The Custom-House', which does not contribute to the plot or introduce the characters. Instead, it sets out several of the novel's major themes. These include the relationship between the individual and society, the best form of political organisation and the idea of duty. This section is also highly autobiographical and reflects some events that took place in Hawthorne's own life.

The story itself begins in the centre of Boston, at the scaffold, which is a large public stage also used to hang criminals. A crowd is gathered and Hester Prynne is brought before them, carrying a child and wearing an embroidered scarlet 'A' on her chest. It is revealed that she is being punished for the crime of adultery, because she conceived her child while her husband was still in England. Her husband is now believed to be lost at sea, and Hester refuses to reveal the name of her child's father. The young and well-respected minister, Arthur Dimmesdale, asks her to reveal the name, but she still refuses.

- **What do you think the scaffold represents in *The Scarlet Letter*?**

An elderly male observer in the crowd signals to Hester not to speak by putting his finger over his lips. It is later revealed that this man is Roger Chillingworth, who is a scholar and doctor and also Hester's husband. He visits Hester in prison and makes her promise to keep the secret about his identity as her husband. He says that he understands her reasons for committing adultery but that he blames the man with whom she was adulterous.

Hester is released from prison and several years pass. She lives a virtuous life and makes a living through her embroidery, but is treated as a social outcast because of her crime and the 'A' around her neck. Her daughter Pearl grows up wild and uncivilised due to her lack of contact with the rest of society. At one point, the town authorities try to take Pearl away from Hester, fearing that she is being brought up in an ungodly way, but Arthur Dimmesdale intervenes to protect Hester and Pearl. Dimmesdale becomes ill, seeming to gradually become weaker despite his youth and popularity in the town. This leads Roger Chillingworth, as the town doctor, to become increasingly close to him. Eventually, Chillingworth moves in with Dimmesdale in order to treat his illness. Chillingworth begins to suspect that Dimmesdale may be Pearl's father and confirms this to himself one afternoon when he sees Dimmesdale sleeping.

One night, Hester and Pearl see Dimmesdale standing on the scaffold out of guilt for his crime. They join him and the three stand together as a family, but Dimmesdale refuses to acknowledge their relationship in public, insisting that it must stay secret. A meteor crosses the sky and spells out the letter 'A'.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

embroidered	decorated by sewing a pattern, picture, or words on it with coloured threads
adultery	having a sexual relationship with someone other than one's husband or wife
minister	a member of the clergy, typically in Christian churches
scholar	specialist on a specific subject
virtuous	behaving in a very honest and moral way
intervenes	becomes involved
meteor	a piece of rock or metal that travels through space, and makes a bright line in the night sky when it falls down towards the Earth.

Hester asks Chillingworth to stop adding to Dimmesdale's troubles by being constantly present in his life, but Chillingworth refuses. She fears that Chillingworth is about to reveal the secret and she and Dimmesdale decide to flee with Pearl to Europe to begin a new life. The day on which they plan to sail from Boston is an important Puritan holiday and, feeling that he is about to be released from his torment, Dimmesdale gives a particularly inspiring sermon to the townspeople. However, Hester learns that Chillingworth knows of their plan and is going to ruin it by accompanying them. If they refuse to let him go with them, he will reveal their secret. In desperation, Dimmesdale climbs on to the scaffold and confesses his crime. He reveals a red 'A' scarred into his chest, which the reader assumes is what Chillingworth saw while Dimmesdale was sleeping, and then Dimmesdale dies.

Shortly afterwards, Chillingworth also dies. Hester and Pearl leave Boston for many years. One day, Hester returns alone and moves back into her old cottage. She continues to wear the 'A', but is now respected throughout the town for her good works and charity. She receives letters and expensive gifts which suggest that Pearl has married into wealth, but this is never confirmed. When Hester eventually dies, she is buried alongside Dimmesdale under a grave marked with an 'A'.

▶ **Why does Hawthorne not confirm what has happened to Pearl at the end of *The Scarlet Letter*, instead just hinting that she has married well and is sending Hester gifts and letters?**

GENERAL VOCABULARY

sermon a talk given as part of a religious service, usually on a religious or moral subject
scarred wounded or cut, leaving a permanent mark on the person's body
charity kindness or sympathy that you show towards other people

CHARACTERS

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

protagonist the main character in a piece of literature

HESTER PRYNNE

- the protagonist
- the most complex character in *The Scarlet Letter*
- beautiful and good-natured
- willing to protect and care for Dimmesdale despite the fact that he has treated her unfairly and refuses to publicly admit it
- devoted to charity work
- an outcast from society because she disobeyed Boston's strict Puritan morals
- a representation of the conflict between society and the individual

GENERAL VOCABULARY

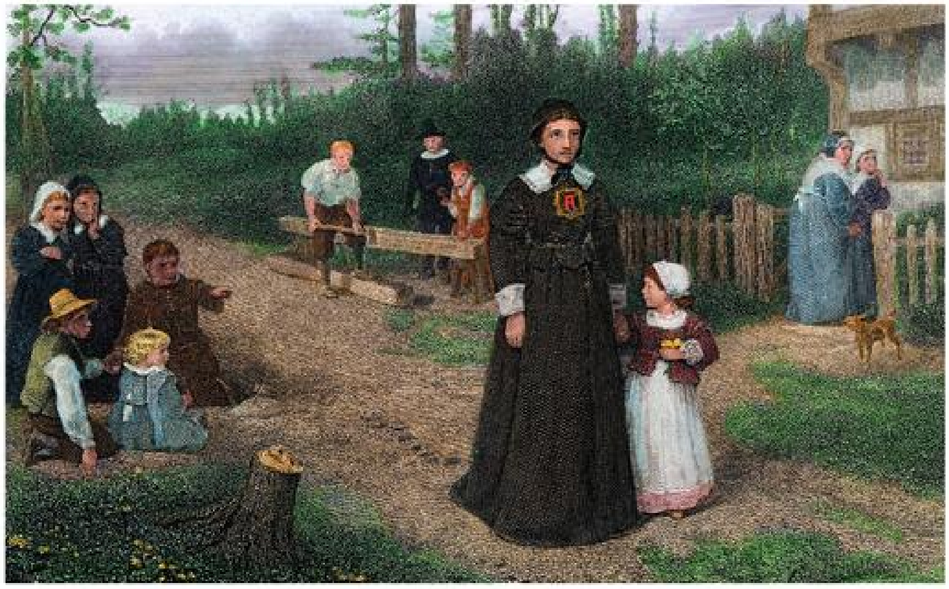
taunting trying to make someone angry or upset by saying unkind things to them

PEARL

- the daughter of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale
- presented as a wild force of nature raised outside the rules and conventions that govern Boston society
- considered a devil at times by Boston's religious rulers
- sometimes cruel, taunting her mother about her 'A'
- loving and affectionate, coming to love Arthur Dimmesdale and publicly kissing him before he dies

ARTHUR DIMMESDALE

- Pearl's father and Hester's co-adulterer
- an excellent public speaker
- uses his speaking skills to convince the town that he is a good man
- too cowardly to damage his reputation by telling the truth about what he has done
- morally aware of right and wrong, despite being a coward
- unable to ignore his moral awareness of right and wrong, which leads to his illness and death
- a weak person rather than an evil one



▶ *The Scarlet Letter* by Hugues Merle

▶ **How do you think this painting represents Hester? Can you see anyone else in the painting? Who do you think they might be?**

ROGER CHILLINGWORTH

- Hester's husband
- a doctor and scholar in the town.
- understanding and forgiving regarding Hester's adultery
- able to recognise that he is much older than Hester and that their marriage was a bad idea
- always cruel to Dimmesdale
- often described as being like a devil in pursuing Dimmesdale's destruction

GENERAL VOCABULARY

satanic relating to practices that treat the Devil like a god

MISTRESS HIBBINS

- Governer Bellingham's sister
- widely believed to be a witch
- often associated with the forest where she interacts with the 'Black Man', who is presumed to be the devil
- willing to tempt Hester to join her in her **satanic** activities in the forest, but is unsuccessful

▶ **Think about the character of Mistress Hibbins. What characterises the moment when she appears in the novel? What tends to happen in such moments? Is Mistress Hibbins aligned more with nature and the wilderness or with the forces of religious authority and civilisation?**

GENERAL VOCABULARY

hypocrite someone who publicly claims to hold certain beliefs while acting completely differently in their own private life
insincere publicly expressing feelings that are not actually felt
veiled hidden or disguised

GOVERNOR BELLINGHAM

- the political leader and authority figure of Boston
- the leader of Hester's punishment and tries to take Pearl away from her
- presented as a **hypocrite**, as he imposes strict Puritanism on everyone else while living in a luxurious mansion
- representative of the harsh, rigid and **insincere** morality of Boston's rulers

REVEREND JOHN WILSON

- Dimmesdale's superior in the church
- unable to recognise that, when he finds Dimmesdale standing on the scaffold at night, it is because Dimmesdale is guilty of a crime
- representative of the foolish, but ultimately well-meaning, nature of Boston's religious leaders

THE NARRATOR OF 'THE CUSTOM-HOUSE'

- a thinly **veiled** version of Hawthorne himself
- used to provide some explanation about how *The Scarlet Letter* came to be written
- distinct from the apparently less autobiographical narrative voice used in the rest of the novel; the connection between these narrative voices is strongly debated

THEMES

GENERAL VOCABULARY

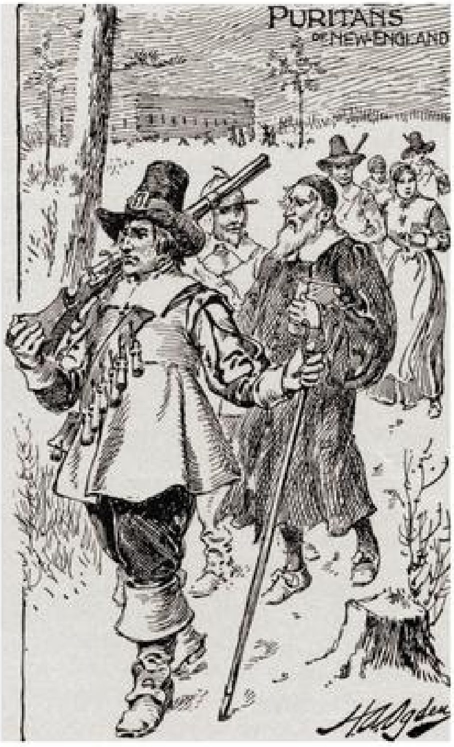
the Ten Commandments ten rules of moral behaviour given in the Bible and followed by Christian churches
congregation the people who usually go to a particular church
preaching talking about a religious subject in a public place, especially in a church during a service

RELIGION

In the Puritan society of *The Scarlet Letter*, religion plays a very different role than it does in modern Western societies. There is no separation between church and state. Instead the law, political power and religion are all closely integrated. By committing adultery, Hester commits a religious sin because she has broken one of **the Ten Commandments**. However, she also commits a legal offence that is punished as a crime through the city's legal code. Religion in *The Scarlet Letter* cannot be separated from any aspect of society and its presence can be felt everywhere.

Hawthorne is generally critical of figures who have gained power or authority through this mixing of religion and politics. In particular, he often presents them as hypocritical because they do not obey the rules that they impose on the rest of society. For example, Arthur Dimmesdale is thought of as a good and moral man by his **congregation**, but in fact he is hiding his sin from the world. Similarly, Governor Bellingham is also presented as a hypocrite because he lives in a grand mansion while **preaching** strict Puritan values to the town. As the narrator states, 'the brilliancy [of the mansion] might have befitted Aladdin's palace, rather than the mansion of a grave old Puritan ruler'.

▶ **Why is Roger Chillingworth so often associated with the devil and described in this way? How does this treatment of his character relate to the theme of religion in the novel as a whole?**



▲ New England Puritans

▶ **Research the reasons why the Puritans left England to settle in America.**

THE INDIVIDUAL VERSUS SOCIETY

One of the most important themes of *The Scarlet Letter* is the relationship between the individual and society. Society, in the form of the city rulers or the townspeople, often seeks complete control over the individual. For example, they try to take Pearl away from Hester. They also try to extract the secret about Pearl's father from Hester. They do not recognise the right of individuals to possess any identity of their own that is separate from society.

In contrast, Hester Prynne often represents the desire of the individual to keep some independence from the crowd and from the town authorities. This can be seen when she first appears on the town scaffold. The women in the crowd are described as 'hard-featured' and 'coarse', but Hester is described as 'elegant', 'beautiful' and 'delicate', which marks her individuality and her separation from a society of people who are all the same. Hester comes to embrace the lonely, individualistic life that she lives in her cottage, which is separated from the rest of the town. She even chooses to live there after returning from her years abroad. She also raises Pearl as a child who is purely natural, existing as an individual outside society's rules and conventions.

DUTY

The theme of duty arises from this conflict between the individual and society. *The Scarlet Letter* particularly focuses on what happens when there is a conflict between different duties – for example, when Hester's duty to bring up Pearl comes into conflict with her duty to obey the town authorities who want to bring up Pearl themselves. Many different kinds of duty come into conflict with one another in this way throughout the course of the novel, including:

- duty to religious morals
- duty to social laws
- duty to oneself
- duty to one's child
- duty to one's legal husband
- duty to one's romantic lover.

One important way in which this idea of duty is expressed in *The Scarlet Letter* is through the use and presentation of secrets. Hester has a duty to Roger Chillingworth as her husband, but this duty conflicts with her duty to Arthur Dimmesdale, to keep his secret as she had promised to. In the same way, Hester also has a duty to Roger Chillingworth to keep his identity secret, as she promised to, but also a duty to protect Arthur Dimmesdale, which might involve revealing the secret of Chillingworth's identity to Dimmesdale. Therefore, this complex conflict between the duty to society and the duty to oneself and one's personal relationships is often represented through secrets.

ACTIVITY 1 **A01** **SKILLS** CRITICAL THINKING, REASONING

▼ THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Copy and complete the table, making a list of the major characters in *The Scarlet Letter*. List all of the duties that each character has, either to themselves, to other individuals, to family or to society. Look out for points where duties contradict each other.

▼ CHARACTER	▼ DUTIES
Pearl	■ To her own nature as a free spirit. ■ To respect and later care for her mother.
Hester Prynne	■ To the puritan society of Boston and its rules. ■ To Roger Chillingworth, her husband. ■ To Arthur Dimmesdale, her lover. ■ To Pearl, her daughter.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbol in literature, people, objects or events that have a meaning other than their literal meaning

CIVILISATION VERSUS THE WILDERNESS

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Boston is a new town, still in the process of being founded. This means that there is a very fine line between the civilisation being built, represented by the town, and the natural wilderness that the town is replacing. Boston is described as 'a little town, on the edge of the Western wilderness'.

The forest is an important symbol of the wilderness. It is located right on the edge of the town and often seems to threaten the town's Puritan values of civilisation and order. For example, it is where Mistress Hibbins is thought to communicate with the devil and where Dimmesdale and Hester meet in order to carry out their affair in secret.

The relationship between civilisation and wilderness is symbolised in an image in the first chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*: the image of the 'wild rose-bush' that grows outside the prison door. The bush and the prison represent nature and civilisation existing side by side. The fact that the prisoners are shown to be comforted by the roses before entering the prison may have been intended by Hawthorne to show the superiority of nature over human order.

AUTHOR'S CRAFT

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

irony using words to convey a meaning that is completely opposite to their apparent meaning

IRONY

Hawthorne uses irony throughout *The Scarlet Letter*. For example, in the chapter entitled 'The Elf-Child and the Minister', Governor Bellingham is described as very grand and important because he looks stern and wears grand clothes, but the actual effect communicated to the reader is that he is ridiculous and foolish. This effect is used to make fun of Boston's authority figures and townspeople throughout the novel.

▶ **Both in 'The Custom-House' and the main body of *The Scarlet Letter,* Hawthorne's narrative voice makes statements about the uselessness of writing and books. For example, the narrator says, 'I cared not, at this period, for books; they were apart from me'. How do statements such as this contribute to the role of irony in the novel?**

GENERAL VOCABULARY

outcast someone who is not accepted by the people they live among

Irony also involves the combination of qualities that contradict each other within a single person. It is ironic that Governor Bellingham preaches Puritanism to others while living in expensive and luxurious surroundings himself. It is ironic that Arthur Dimmesdale is such a skilful public speaker and yet is unable to speak the words that would free him from the suffering of keeping his secret. It is ironic that Hester Prynne is treated as an outcast by a strict Puritan society that values virtue despite the fact that she is one of the most virtuous characters in the novel.

ACTIVITY 2 **A01** **SKILLS** ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Copy and complete the table, listing the people or institutions in *The Scarlet Letter* that you think Hawthorne treats with irony. For each one describe how you think the effect of irony is achieved.

▼ SUBJECT OF IRONY	▼ HOW THE EFFECT IS ACHIEVED
Arthur Dimmesdale	By making him a great public speaker who will not state his most important secret in public.
Governor Bellingham	By having him preach strict Puritanism and the value of self-control while living in a grand mansion.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

narrative the story or plot

NARRATIVE ORGANISATION

The Scarlet Letter is largely structured around the opposition between public and private spaces. It moves backwards and forwards between public scenes, set in places such as the town scaffold or the Governor's mansion, and private scenes, set in places like Hester's cottage or the forest. This alternating narrative structure plays an important role in communicating many of the novel's key themes, such as the opposition between individual and society, and the need to preserve secrets from public view.

The novel is also structured around the three scenes set on the scaffold:

- the scene in which Hester first emerges from prison before the crowd wearing her 'A'
- the scene where Dimmesdale stands on the scaffold at night and is joined by Hester and Pearl
- the scene in which Dimmesdale confesses and dies.

These scenes occur at the beginning, the middle and the end of the novel and they contain its most dramatic and important moments. This shows the significance in Puritan society of public spaces such as the scaffold, as well as the ideas of ceremony and of punishment that are associated with them.

LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

GENERAL VOCABULARY

the Old Testament the first part of the Bible

LANGUAGE

Hawthorne has a particularly complex way of writing that can often be difficult to read. He uses strange, old-fashioned words like 'ignominy' and 'verily', and long sentences that are made up of many separate clauses. One reason he writes in this way is to produce a feeling of authority and importance. In particular, this kind of language echoes the language of **the Old Testament**, thus reflecting the religious world of Puritan New England. This important-sounding language is also key to producing irony and comedy. Ridiculous people like Mistress Hibbins or Governor Bellingham seem funnier if they are described in very grand language.

However, despite the complexity of Hawthorne's language, one of the most important uses of language in *The Scarlet Letter* is silence or refusing to speak. Hester's refusal to name Pearl's father, either on the scaffold or later on, is far more powerful than any of her words could be. Likewise, Dimmesdale's silence and his refusal to confess reveals his character far more effectively than his skilful speeches and sermons.

ACTIVITY 3

A01

SKILLS REASONING, INTERPRETATION, COLLABORATION, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Work with a partner to complete the following table. One of you lists all of the moments in the novel where speaking is important. The other lists all of the moments where not speaking and remaining silent is important. Then discuss what you have found with your partner. Consider the following questions.

- **Where do these events take place? Are there certain spaces where speech tends to happen and certain places where silence tends to happen?**
- **Do certain characters tend to speak and others to remain silent?**

▼ SPEAKING IS IMPORTANT	▼ SILENCE IS IMPORTANT
Arthur Dimmesdale confesses on the scaffold.	Roger Chillingworth signals for Hester to remain silent when he sees her on the scaffold.
Pearl asks open and honest questions about Arthur Dimmesdale and his relationship with her and Hester.	Hawthorne does not reveal what has happened to Pearl at the end of the novel.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbolism using symbols to represent particular concepts or ideas

SYMBOLISM

Symbolism is used throughout *The Scarlet Letter*. For example, symbols of nature are consistently built up using flowers, the sea and the forest. This natural imagery plays an important role in terms of character and theme, for example, in the figure of Pearl, by defining her as a child of nature as opposed to a child of society. In contrast, the town is often associated with symbols of punishment and death, such as the scaffold or the prison and graveyard, which are mentioned in the early chapter entitled 'The Prison-Door'.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

static not moving; fixed

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

symbolic where a person, object or event is used by a writer to convey a meaning beyond its literal meaning

The Scarlet Letter that hangs around Hester's neck is also a symbol. Indeed, it is a symbol that is repeated at significant points in the plot. First, it is repeated in the letter 'A' that the meteor makes in the sky as Hester, Dimmesdale and Pearl stand on the scaffold. Much later, it is repeated again in the letter 'A' carved on Hester and Dimmesdale's shared grave. The 'A' is a particularly interesting symbol because its meaning changes. It starts off as a symbol of Hester's crime and sin, but by the end of the novel it serves instead as a symbol of her goodness. This shows that, while some symbols are static and have fixed meanings, Hawthorne is also interested in the way that the meaning of symbols can shift and become a site of conflict. For example, when Hester uses her embroidery skills to make the letter beautiful and therefore contradict its original Puritanical purpose, this is a sign of this symbolic conflict.

ACTIVITY 4

A01

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Pick a theme of *The Scarlet Letter* and list the ways in which Hawthorne uses symbolism to communicate it. For example, you could say, 'The theme of the restrictiveness of Puritan society is communicated through symbols of punishment, such as the prison, the scaffold and Hester Prynne's scarlet letter.'

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

A01 **A02** **A04**

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, REASONING, INTERPRETATION, ADAPTIVE LEARNING

HINT

In the exam, you will have 45 minutes in which to write your essay. There will be a choice of two questions on the paper. Use these exam-style questions to practise exam technique and timing. Remember to consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your response.

1 Compare and contrast the characters of Roger Chillingworth and Arthur Dimmesdale. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 marks)**

2 How does Hawthorne explore the conflict between society and the individual in *The Scarlet Letter*? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 marks)**

3 Explore the relationship between Hester Prynne and Pearl. You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 marks)**

4 What is the significance of silence or the refusal to speak in *The Scarlet Letter*? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 Explore the significance of symbols in *The Scarlet Letter. You* must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer. **(30 marks)**

5 There are a wide range of symbols present within *The Scarlet Letter*, making symbolism a very important technique for Hawthorne.[1] The use of visual symbols often associated with nature allows for character development and the introduction of interesting metaphors. An example of this is Pearl who has grown up away from civilised society and is much closer to nature, making her a vibrant character.[2] In contrast, the scaffold is a clear symbol of death within the story.[3] The letter from the book's title is another reccurring symbol[4], described by the narrator as 'a mystic symbol'. By calling it this, the reader can understand that it is not just a symbol of shame as the townspeople want, but also has different meanings.

[1] A01: This opening shows an understanding of text overall in relation to the question.

[2] A02: To comment more closely on Hawthorne's technique, could be it explained how she is a symbol?

[3] A02: It is a good idea to mention a few relevant points in the introduction, before writing about them in detail later on. Can you think of any more symbols that could have been included?

[4] A01: For good written style, you might need to think of synonyms for key words in the question. Can you think of any synonyms for 'symbol'?

PAPER 3: MODERN DRAMA AND LITERARY HERITAGE TEXTS

This chapter focuses on Paper 3: Modern Drama and Literary Heritage Texts of the English Literature course. Working through these lessons and activities will help you develop the reading and writing skills you will need for the Paper 3 coursework.

Paper 3 is worth 40% of the total marks for the course and is split into two sections:

- Assignment A: Modern drama
- Assignment B: Literary heritage texts.

In Assignment A of your coursework you will need to be able to meet the Assessment Objectives AO1 and AO2.

In Assignment B of your coursework you will need to be able to meet the Assessment Objectives AO1, AO2 and AO4.

Assessment Objective 1

Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement

Assessment Objective 2

Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects

Assessment Objective 4 (only applies to Assignment B)

Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

AO1 is worth 17% of marks

AO2 is worth 17% of marks

AO4 is worth 7% of marks

COURSEWORK OVERVIEW

These two pages give those taking this option a general idea of the coursework requirements. They are followed by a section on Assignment A and another on Assignment B. The coursework option (also called **Paper 3**), provides an alternative to examination **Paper 2** and covers the same content in different ways. It has advantages and disadvantages.

The two coursework tasks for Paper 3 are as follows:

- **Assignment A** on Modern Drama
- **Assignment B** on Literary Heritage Texts.

The following table is an extract from the specification.

CONTENT SUMMARY

- One modern drama text from the list of set texts on page 11 of the specification.
- One literary heritage text from the list of set texts on page 12 of the specification.
- Develop skills to analyse how language, form, structure and contextual factors can be used to create meaning and effect.
- Develop skills to maintain a critical style and informed personal response.

ASSESSMENT

- The assessment of this paper is through two coursework assignments, internally set and assessed, and externally moderated by Pearson.
- Assignment A – Modern Drama: one essay response to a teacher-devised assignment on the studied text.
- Assignment B – Literary Heritage Texts: one essay response to a teacher-devised assignment on the studied text.
- The total number of marks available is 60 (30 marks for each assignment).

Written coursework carries **40%** of your total Literature International GCSE marks (the same as the equivalent exam, Paper 2). Although you must work under the guidance of your teacher, who is authorised to assess your coursework and who has to validate it, coursework is essentially something that you are in charge of. It is vital that you do not copy or borrow writing from elsewhere and then pretend it is your own. You will be required to sign a form stating that the work is your own, and it should be a matter of personal pride that this is the case.

Assessment Objective 1

Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement

Assessment Objective 2

Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects

Assessment Objective 4 (only applies to Assignment B)

Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

HINT

Note that AO3 (relating to comparison) is not relevant to the coursework at all.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF COURSEWORK

There are many advantages to coursework.

- You have more time to plan, think about and improve your assignments.
- They do not have to be done under controlled conditions.
- You have more freedom to choose what to write about and what to submit.
- Your coursework folder is solid evidence of what *you* can do, in your own time.

There are disadvantages too.

- Coursework may take up too much of your time: the two assignments together are worth 40% of the International GCSE, whereas the exam is worth 60%, so exam preparation must be given priority. Some students spend far too much time trying to get the coursework as good as they can make it, only to underachieve in the exam.
- There are temptations to take short cuts. If you do cheat and get found out, the penalties can be very severe. Teachers and moderators are skilled in detecting plagiarism. It is simply not worth the risk. Furthermore, you learn nothing from it in terms of writing skills.

WORD COUNT

There is no set word count for the coursework paper. Typically, your response to each task may be up to 1000 words, but there are no penalties for exceeding this guidance. However, it is pointless to exceed it by a great deal.

REQUIREMENTS

AUTHENTICITY

Near the end of the course you will be asked to sign a Coursework Authentication to confirm that you produced your coursework independently. Teachers are always warned to look out for signs of plagiarism or excessive assistance from others. You should therefore work independently, although it is a good idea to show others what you have written and ask for an oral response.

PRESENTATION OF THE WORK

Each piece of coursework should contain your name, the date on which the work was completed, the mark awarded and a brief teacher comment justifying the mark. This comment should be based on the assessment criteria for the mark range awarded. Coursework pieces may be handwritten or typed.

STANDARDISATION OF COURSEWORK

Towards the end of the course, Pearson will request a sample of coursework to be sent to a Pearson-appointed coursework moderator. The moderator will either broadly confirm the marks awarded by the teachers in the centre or will adjust marks accordingly. English departments always standardise the marking by sharing out work from each class amongst all the teachers in the department, so that the marking of all the year group is consistent.

REFERENCE TO PREVIOUS CHAPTERS FOR HELP WITH COURSEWORK

The content and Assessment Objectives for the coursework and for Paper 2 are the same. So the chapters on modern drama and literary heritage texts for the exam are highly relevant to the coursework too. You will find references to them in the next section, encouraging you to read the sections on the two texts that you will be writing about.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand how to approach the modern drama piece of coursework.

ASSIGNMENT A – MODERN DRAMA

The first assignment is an analytical answer to a question on one of the plays set by the exam board. The assignment is worth 20% of the International GCSE in English Literature (the same as Assignment B). The list of set texts is as follows.

A View from the Bridge	Arthur Miller
An Inspector Calls	J.B. Priestley
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time	Simon Stephens
Kindertransport	Diane Samuels
Death and the King's Horseman	Wole Soyinka

The assignment will be marked out of 30 with 15 marks for A01 and 15 marks for A02. There is no assessment of AOs 3 and 4.

WORD COUNT

There is no set word count for the coursework paper. Typically, each essay may be up to 1000 words, but there are no penalties for exceeding this guidance.

THE QUESTION

Your teacher will set the question or choice of questions. Assignments could take the following formats.

- **How does Soyinka present conflict in *Death and the King's Horseman*?**
- **Explore the ways in which Priestley presents social inequality in *An Inspector Calls*.**
- **In what ways does Miller present men in *A View from the Bridge*?**

The mark scheme for Assignment A is as follows, from Levels 2–5:

▼ LEVEL	▼ MARK	▼ AO1 DEMONSTRATE A CLOSE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF TEXTS, MAINTAINING A CRITICAL STYLE AND PRESENTING AN INFORMED PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT (15 MARKS) ▼ AO2 ANALYSE THE LANGUAGE, FORM AND STRUCTURE USED BY A WRITER TO CREATE MEANINGS AND EFFECTS (15 MARKS)
Level 2	7–12	■ The response may be largely narrative with some evidence of personal engagement or critical style. ■ Some knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Some comment on the language, form and structure. ■ Some use of relevant examples in support.
Level 3	13–18	■ The response shows relevant personal engagement and an appropriate critical style. ■ Sound knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Sound understanding of language, form and structure. ■ Use of clearly relevant examples in support.
Level 4	19–24	■ The response shows thorough personal engagement and a sustained critical style. ■ Thorough knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Sustained analysis of language, form and structure. ■ Use of fully relevant examples in support.
Level 5	25–30	■ The response shows assured personal engagement and a perceptive critical style. ■ Assured knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Cohesive evaluation language, form and structure. ■ Discriminating use of relevant examples in support.

ACTIVITIES FROM THE MODERN DRAMA CHAPTER

Once your teacher has told you which play you will be studying, turn to the chapter in this book on modern drama (pages 194-247) and read the introduction, followed by the section of the chapter that relates to the chosen play. The mark scheme for the exam is identical to the one shown above for coursework, since the assessment objectives are exactly the same. The main differences between the exam essay and the coursework essay are simply that the coursework is expected to be longer and better written, since it is pre-prepared and you have much longer to write it. So read the section carefully and do the activities included – they will help.

ACTIVITY ON EXEMPLAR RESPONSES

Before you start to plan your own work, read the following extracts from two essays written by Internatioal GCSE candidates. Assess them using the mark scheme above.

▼ AN EXTRACT FROM AN ESSAY ON *AN INSPECTOR CALLS* ANSWERING THE QUESTION: ‘HOW DOES PRIESTLEY PRESENT INSPECTOR GOOLE, AND USE HIM TO EXPLORE CHARACTER AND THEMES?’

His language and impact on Birling and on the audience

After his first grim announcement about the dead young woman, the inspector quickly irritates Birling (but pleases most members of an audience) by challenging him, and being in no sense in awe of him:

> Birling: Well, inspector, I don’t see that it’s any concern of yours how I choose to run my business, is it now?
>
> Inspector: It might be, you know.
>
> Birling: I don’t like that tone[1].

Goole with Sheila and Gerald

Priestley is careful to make the members of the Birling family react in different ways. Birling takes no responsibility for spoiling the life of Eva Smith, but Sheila readily admits her share of the blame. The inspector says of her: ‘She feels responsible. And if she leaves us now, then she’ll feel she’s entirely to blame.’ Sheila feels that he has understood her – ‘[eagerly] Yes, that’s it. And I know I’m to blame – and I’m desperately sorry…’. The audience is almost bound to feel firstly that Sheila arrogantly over-reached in getting Eva sacked, but secondly that she is now feeling bad about what happened, and this wins sympathy for her from the audience, and acknowledgement from the inspector. Likewise, we feel that although Gerald has exploited her by making her his mistress when she was so vulnerable, he too feels guilty, and the inspector is skilful at drawing out his confession[2]. We feel that somehow the whole family is mixed up in the tragedy of Eva Smith.

How Goole controls the structure of the play

By now the audience realises that Goole is the key to the play’s structure – he is in control of the questioning process and reveals certain facts at the best point to keep the audience interested, and in suspense. He seems to reach the end of one line of inquiry, then quickly moves the story on, as he does with Gerald, “Now she had to try something else. So she first changed her name to Daisy Renton’. The play is structured so that each member of the family is interviewed individually and they tell their own part of the story in chronological order. The outline is based on that of many a detective story following the investigation of a suspicious death through various discoveries and interviews conducted by the detective; but in this play, in which all the action happens in ‘real time’, unusually, almost the whole play consists of the inspector’s interviews[3]. What Priestley has done is taken the form of the detective play of the popular Agatha Christie type and turned it to a different purpose, less of real ‘whodunnit’ and more of an inquest into social responsibility[4].

This extract is clearly either Level 4 or Level 5 – which do you think? The descriptors for Levels 3–5 are printed on page 320.

[1] Do you think that this is a ‘fully relevant example in support’ [Level 4], or a ‘discriminating use of relevant example in support’ [Level 5]?

[2] Does this demonstrate ‘thorough knowledge and understanding’ of this part of the play?

[3] Would you say that this paragraph demonstrates a ‘cohesive evaluation of structure’ [Level 5]?

[4] Has the response showed ‘assured personal engagement and a perceptive critical style’ [Level 5]?

▼ AN EXTRACT FROM AN ESSAY ON *A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE* ANSWERING THE QUESTION: 'HOW DOES MILLER PRESENT EDDIE CORBONE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CATHERINE?'

Eddie has acted as a father to his wife's niece ever since she was an infant: he has been good to her, and kept the promise he made to her mother as she was dying. Miller has placed their relationship at the centre of the play in terms of structure and themes, since it is the tension between Eddie and Catherine, arising from his possessiveness, and his unwillingness to grant her independence, that is the mainspring of the plot. He even says to her at one point, 'I just never figured that you would ever grow up'.

Miller presents the relationship[1] in details which are vivid on the stage, for example Eddie's comments on her skirt which he admires but also worries him: 'you are walkin' wavy', he says, 'The heads are turnin' like windmills'. And he is also worried about her job and the people she will come across. Miller uses a stage direction to tell the actor and reader that he is 'almost sickened' with worry[2]. 'You can't be so friendly, kid', he says, trying to stop her making too many male friends.

The first evening he tells her to take off her 'high-heeled shoes' and his face is 'puffed with trouble' when he sees C and Rodolpho together. Eddie is very critical of Rodolpho (who he thinks 'ain't right[3]'), but he cannot admit to himself that his feelings may be inappropriately strong. Catherine tries to make them friends, while Beatrice says to Eddie, sensing the problem, 'You're the one who's mad', and asks him almost scornfully if he intends to 'keep her in the house all her life[4]'.

We learn that he has not made love to Beatrice in months, and the implication is that he is infatuated with Catherine. She is still relatively innocent and even walks around the house at times in a slip, not realising that Eddie may have feelings for her that go beyond that of an adoptive father. Beatrice tells her to act 'different', meaning in a more grown-up way. She needs to make Catherine understand so that her marriage to Eddie will survive.

Eddie admits to Alfieri that 'it's eatin me out' to see her in love with Rodolpho, and Alfieri says, 'I knew where he was heading for, I knew where he was going to end'. The comments by Alfieri help to give structure to the play, since he acts as a kind of narrator, and everything he says, the audience realises, is important to the plot and the characters[5].

Miller creates a climax at the end of Act I when Eddie sets up a fight with Rodolpho and hits him – Catherine sides with Rodolpho and goes to his side, angry with Eddie: it is clear how her feelings stand at this point, which also prepares us for the ending of the play[6].

In the next act she calls him a 'rat' and it seems that she has lost her love and respect for him.

This is perhaps not as sophisticated as the previous answer (though it might do very well in an exam). Try to assess it using the mark scheme descriptors on page 320, to which the questions in the margin refer.

[1] It is a good idea to use key words from the essay title, as here, and to do so more than once. It shows that you are engaging with the question.

[2] A technique is identified and this shows 'sound understanding of form' [Level 3]. How could the writer develop this so that it contributed to 'sustained analysis' of form or language?

[3] Embedded quotations.

[4] Would you agree that this last sentence is only 'descriptive'? What does it need to become analytical?

[5] Do you think this point shows a good 'critical style'? If it is also 'perceptive', it takes the essay towards Level 5.

[6] Again, can you see how you might develop this point to show a stronger personal engagement?

DESCRIPTORS FROM THE MARK SCHEME

Level 3	■ The response shows relevant personal engagement and an appropriate critical style. ■ Sound knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Sound understanding of language, form and structure. ■ Use of clearly relevant examples in support.
Level 4	■ The response shows thorough personal engagement and a sustained critical style. ■ Thorough knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Sustained analysis of language, form and structure. ■ Use of fully relevant examples in support.
Level 5	■ The response shows assured personal engagement and a perceptive critical style. ■ Assured knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Cohesive evaluation of language, form and structure. ■ Discriminating use of relevant examples in support.

HOW TO QUOTE

You should do this frequently: see the paragraph on this on page 331, in the section titled 'Exam preparation'.

PRESENTATION OF COURSEWORK

It will help you if you can master the basics of good presentation.

FRAMING

- Your name should be at the top of every page.
- The full title of the essay must be written out and you must refer to the wording from time to time in the essay, especially in the conclusion.
- You should include an approximate word count at the end.

PARAGRAPHING

- Good paragraphing is essential. Make sure that each paragraph is clearly indented (you can also leave a line between paragraphs to make the breaks even clearer).
- Make sure your paragraphs are a good length: neither too short (3 lines) nor too long (three quarters of a page). A good average length is 6–8 lines or 100–150 words. This should be enough to explore one topic in some detail.
- Make sure your paragraphs are linked by appropriate phrases such as 'In addition' or 'On the other hand'. Sometimes, just the word 'also' or 'too' can be a good link, as in, 'Eric also has a reason to…'.

BASIC SPELLING AND GRAMMAR

- To make a plural of a surname just add 's', for example, *the Montagues*. If you add an apostrophe, this indicates the possessive, for example, *the Montagues' house.*
- Make sure that you always use initial caps with the title of the text (and of course with any other proper nouns!).
- Book and play titles should always be either in *italics* or in inverted commas, for example, 'A View from the Bridge' or *An Inspector Calls*.
- Check all spellings (look out for *there/their*, *its/it's* and other basic errors).
- Check grammar and punctuation: they should be accurate. Avoid the comma splice (two main clauses combined without any conjunction and with only a comma between them). Either add a conjunction or change the comma to a full stop or colon if appropriate.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand how to approach the literary heritage piece of coursework.

ASSIGNMENT B – LITERARY HERITAGE TEXTS

This will be based on one of the literary heritage texts listed below. Your teacher will give you the title of a suitable essay. There is no set word length for the coursework paper but, as for Assignment A, you should aim to write around 1000 words and there are no penalties for writing more. The list of set texts is as follows.

Romeo and Juliet	William Shakespeare
Macbeth	William Shakespeare
The Merchant of Venice	William Shakespeare
Pride and Prejudice	Jane Austen
Great Expectations	Charles Dickens
The Scarlet Letter	Nathaniel Hawthorne

The assignment will be marked out of 30 with 10 marks for A01, 10 marks for A02 and 10 marks for A04 (the marks for A04 make this very different from Assignment A).

SETTING THE QUESTION

Assignments could take one of the following formats.

- **'Jane Austen presents many different types of prejudice in *Pride and Prejudice*'. To what extent do you agree?**
- **How does Dickens portray love in *Great Expectations*?**
- **In what ways is *Macbeth* a tragedy rather than a melodrama?**

You will study whole texts, rather than just specific sections, therefore developing comprehension and critical reading skills. This will also allow you to produce clear and coherent writing using accurate, Standard English. To further develop these skills, you should try to read as wide a range of literary texts as possible.

ACTIVITIES FROM THE LITERARY HERITAGE CHAPTER

The next thing you should do is turn to the section on literary heritage texts (pages 248-311) and read the introduction, followed by the section on the text you are studying for the coursework, completing each of the activities. The mark scheme for the exam questions is identical to the following one shown for coursework, since the Assessment Objectives are exactly the same. The main differences between the exam essay and the coursework essay are simply that the coursework is expected to be longer and better written, since it is pre-prepared and you have much longer to write it. So read the section carefully and do the activities included – they will help.

The mark scheme for Assignment B is as follows, from Level 2 to Level 5.

Note that this is rather different from the scheme for Assignment A, mainly because it includes AO4, which refers to the contexts of texts studied.

LEVEL	MARK	AO1 DEMONSTRATE A CLOSE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF TEXTS, MAINTAINING A CRITICAL STYLE AND PRESENTING AN INFORMED PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT (10 MARKS) AO2 ANALYSE THE LANGUAGE, FORM AND STRUCTURE USED BY A WRITER TO CREATE MEANINGS AND EFFECTS (10 MARKS) AO4 SHOW UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEXTS AND THE CONTEXTS IN WHICH THEY WERE WRITTEN (10 MARKS)
Level 2	7–12	■ The response may be largely narrative with some evidence of personal engagement or critical style. ■ Some knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Some comment on the language, form and structure. ■ There is some comment on the relationship between text and context. ■ Some use of relevant examples in support.
Level 3	13–18	■ The response shows relevant personal engagement and an appropriate critical style. ■ Sound knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Sound understanding of language, form and structure. ■ There is relevant comment on the relationship between text and context. ■ Use of clearly relevant examples in support.
Level 4	19–24	■ The response shows thorough personal engagement and a sustained critical style. ■ Thorough knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Sustained analysis of language, form and structure. ■ There is a detailed awareness of the relationship between text and contexts. ■ Use of fully relevant examples in support.
Level 5	25–30	■ The response shows assured personal engagement and a perceptive critical style. ■ Assured knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Cohesive evaluation of language, form and structure. ■ Understanding of the relationship between text and context is integrated convincingly into the response. ■ Discriminating use of relevant examples in support.

Since the Assessment Objectives are the same as for the exam, turn to page 329 in the section on exam preparation and read the comments on how to interpret some of the key phrases, such as ‘informed personal engagement’.

UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A TEXT AND ITS CONTEXT (AO4)

This phrase from AO4 is one that needs to be added to the other Assessment Objectives, since it is not assessed in Assignment A. It is worth a third of the marks for this essay. There are different kinds, or categories, of context that affect authors' work and the reader's response to it. These include:

- the author's own life and individual situation, including the place and time of writing, only where these relate to the text
- the historical setting, time and location of the text
- social and cultural contexts (for example, attitudes in society; expectations of different cultural groups)
- the literary context of the text (for example, literary movements or genres)
- the way in which texts are received and engaged with by different audiences, at different times (for example, how a text may be read differently in the 21st century from when it was written).

You are certainly not expected to write about all of these, nor should you write a section of your essay all about the context: the best way to approach context is to include a sentence or so in different paragraphs, as appropriate. There are some examples given below in the sample essays on Shakespeare.

ACTIVITY ON EXEMPLAR RESPONSES

Before you start to plan your own work, here are extracts from two essays written by International GCSE candidates. Read them and assess them using the mark scheme on page 323.

▼ AN EXTRACT FROM AN ESSAY ON *ROMEO AND JULIET*, ANSWERING THE QUESTION: 'EXPLORE THE WAYS IN WHICH ROMEO AND MERCUTIO ARE PRESENTED IN THE PLAY UP TO MERCUTIO'S DEATH.'

Romeo is the son of the head Montague and he is of 16–17 years of age. Shakespeare presents Romeo as a romantic and obsessive person. As being the son of a Montague he keeps Juliet a secret from his family. He is also presented as an outcast of the Montague family. We know this because in the begining of the play in act 1 scene 1 Romeo was not shown in the early brawl of the play[1] but was instead in the forest. We know this because his mother asks the question,

> 'O where is Romeo? saw him you today? right glad he was not in this fray'

So this obviously suggests that he was not helping his family fight. Romeo was also presented as a depressive person and also very private another evidence for this is that his father said so,

> 'And private in his chamber pen himself'

On the other hand Romeo also knows how to stand up for his friends he is also very loyal person.

[1] Does the repetition of the words 'of the play' and the inaccurate reference to a 'forest' show the 'sustained critical style' and 'thorough knowledge' required for Level 4? What about the equivalents for Level 3?

Mercutio is the prince kinsman. He is Romeos best friend and is the clown of the group and also what some might say the leader. Mercuric is clever through out the whole play and is very eloquent and skilled with words and he also does not take himself very seriously at all. Mercutio was introduced in act 1 scene 4 where is he shown to be trying to make Romeo happy because Romeo was upset because the girl he loved (Rosaline) would not take an interest in him. An example of this is that mercuric says

"Nay gentle Romeo we must have you dance" as you can see he makes an Immediate impact on the audience. He also a very dirty minded person but back in shakesphere times it would have ok to say things like that. Mercutios likes to use innuendos.

The relationship between Romeo and mercutio is very important for the play. There is a huge contrast between the two. For example Romeo takes himself serious and mercutio doesn't; Romeo is also passionate but mercutio is the complete opposite etc.

Before act 2 scene 4 Romeo has been through drastic changes the reason why is because he met Juliet in act 1 scene 5. In that scene Romeo instantly falls in love with Juliet. Romeo is very impulsive because in that scene he instantly kisses Juliet and says very romantic words. Such as

"If I profane with my unworthiness hand" Shakespeare presents Romeo as very clever for his age for using words that are so romantic. Juliet was very resistant at first but eventually gave it to Romeos charms.

This is very surprising because Romeo love for Rosaline has completely vanished so this tells us that he was not truly in love with her as he thought. Shakespeare presents Romeo as a person whose mood changes very quickly he is also presented as highly susceptible when it comes to women. he becomes very obsessive with Juliet. Once he met Juliet he became very happy

Try to assess this extract, using the descriptors for Levels 2–4. Do you think any of it is on Level 4?

Next, read the following extract from an obviously better answer to the same question, and assess it using the table on page 323.

▼ AN EXTRACT FROM AN ESSAY ON *ROMEO AND JULIET*, ANSWERING THE QUESTION: 'EXPLORE THE WAYS IN WHICH ROMEO AND MERCUTIO ARE PRESENTED IN THE PLAY UP TO MERCUTIO'S DEATH.'

By the end of Act II we have learned a great deal about Romeo and Mercutio: in Act I scene 1 Romeo is presented as a loner, a bit moody and solitary – 'and private in his chamber pens himself'. He also comes across as unhappy ('Ay me, sad hours seem long') and a failure in love, since he loves a girl called Rosaline who isn't intrested[1] in him. He is shown by Shakespeare to be confused, deep in sad and gloomy thoughts and a bit of

[1] The occasional spelling mistake will not lose you marks on this assignment.

[2] Would it be better to write 'makes his father say that Romeo is "adding…"'?

a dreamer. We see this when Shakespeare makes his father say[2] ‘Adding to the clouds more clouds with his deep sighs’; and when Romeo talks of ‘misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms’, and ‘O teach me how I should forget to think’. So at the start he seems like a somewhat depressed teenager.

However, his character changes dramatically in the following scenes, Act I scene 5 and Act II scene 2: when he sees and meets Juliet for the first time, Shakespeare presents him as a bold, daring, passionate but romantic and sensitive character, taking hold of Juliet’s hand and speaking of it as a ‘shrine’. An Elizabethan audience would have recognised in him aspects of the extravagant, poetic lover that had become rather fashionable in that period. They might even have realised that he and Juliete are speaking in the form of a dramatised sonnet here! He is also shown as quick-thinking, persevering and certainly not shy with girls. He shows this in his conversation with Juliet when he replies to her ‘have not saints lips?’ and when he gets his ‘sin again’ (ie a kiss) from her. He expresses his passionate and romantic nature in the scene in the Capulets’ garden when he says (among other things) that ‘stony limits cannot hold love out’.

For a response that would be considered a secure Level 5 in all respects, read the following essay extract.

▼ AN EXTRACT FROM AN ESSAY ON *MACBETH*, ANSWERING THE QUESTION: ‘IN WHAT WAYS DOES SHAKESPEARE PRESENT MACBETH AS A TRAGIC HERO RATHER THAN A MELODRAMATIC VILLAIN?’

A hero linked with witches in scenes 1–2

One of Shakespeare’s methods is to open his play with the witches thus presenting them as characters in the drama, and an evil influence on the protagonist: this bold dramatic device adds greatly to the atmosphere of unnatural wrongdoing in the play, and lends a touch of dramatic irony to the praise heaped on Macbeth in Scene 2. When they say they are going to ‘meet with Macbeth’ at the end of the scene, he is linked with them even before we meet him. Nonetheless in the second scene it is made clear that he is a great hero. Shakespeare takes most of this scene to establish how his companions see him as a truly formidable fighter and leader, and the line ‘he unseamed him from the nave to the chops’ leaves us in no doubt of his warlike abilities. He is compared to a ‘lion’ and an ‘eagle’ (kings of animals and birds); King Duncan praises him: 'For brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name’. In key scenes of the play, as Shakespeare carefully structures his decline under the influence of evil agents, he is shown to become less and less heroic, and more and more deceitful, sinister and brutal; but it is important for Shakespeare’s purposes of tragic characterisation, that he should be presented at the start as a man on the verge of true greatness.

Macbeth and witchcraft in scene 3

Just before Macbeth's first appearance in Act I, sc 3, the witches appear again, we assume to 'meet with Macbeth', and here thay are in the scene for longer and play an important part in it. Though a modern audience will only treat the witches as figments of the imagination, and embodiments of evil, Shakespeare knew that his audiences thought that witches really were the agents of the devil, and many believed that certain people, particularly strange women, could practise witchcraft. The new King, Scottish King James, for whom he wrote the play, thought that he had been a target of witchcraft in Scotland, wrote a short book about it ('Daemonologie'), and saw to it that some women were tried for it. Although Macbeth and Banquo are both astonished by the witches, their reactions to the prophecies are very different once the other noblemen have greeted Macbeth as Thane of Cawdor. Banquo reacts with great caution, warning Macbeth (quite correctly, according to Christian thinking) that 'oftentimes, to win us to our harm, / The instruments of darkness tell us truths,... to betray's / In deepest consequence'. But Macbeth's thoughts are the opposite of heroic or rational here – Shakespeare uses a revealing 'aside' – the theatrical equivalent of the voiceover in films – to show us how in his excitedly ambitious state he immediately thinks of murdering the good King Duncan: '...my thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical'... 'horrible imaginings'. We feel that if he had been like Banquo, he would have been able to resist the witches' corruption. In other words, Banquo has more of the moral character of a hero than Macbeth, who is clearly flawed in being so easily influenced by the witches.

Do you see why this would be awarded a high mark? Read these paragraphs through again and assess it using the mark scheme descriptors for Level 5, shown in the following table. Don't forget that this extract is not the whole essay so you would not necessarily expect it to fulfil all the criteria.

▼ DESCRIPTORS FROM THE MARK SCHEME

Level 5	■ The response shows assured personal engagement and a perceptive critical style. ■ Assured knowledge and understanding of the text. ■ Cohesive evaluation of language, form and structure. ■ Understanding of the relationship between text and context is integrated convincingly into the response. ■ Discriminating use of relevant examples in support.

EXAM PREPARATION

SUCCESSFUL REVISION

Many books offer different suggestions and advice for revision. One thing is clear: not everything works for everyone. Each person has particular ways of revising and habits of working. Look at all the advice and try out the different suggestions. Decide clearly what knowledge, skills and techniques you need to develop, strengthen or revisit.

PLAN YOUR LEARNING AND REVISION

HOW TO PLAN A SCHEDULE

- Draw up a table to show the days and weeks before the examination.
- Decide how much time to give to the subject in each week or day.
- Work out a timetable.
- Think about the need for variety and breaks.
- Make sure your schedule is building towards a 'peak' at the right time.

HOW TO IMPROVE

- Test yourself.
- Test a friend.
- Practise writing answers to examination questions.
- Write answers within the time limits of the actual examination.
- Check that you understand all texts, looking at words, meaning, plot and character.
- Revise technical terms using the glossary.
- Be sure you can apply these terms properly, spell them properly, give examples, and explain how and why they are used.

MAKE NOTES!

- Write down key points from: teachers; books you read; class work; articles or worksheets.
- Annotate your copy of the Anthology poems in Section C carefully.
- Add points that you missed onto the end of your homework or practice questions when they are returned to you.

AIDS TO LEARNING

Write short, clear notes. Use aids such as:

- postcards
- diagrams
- flowcharts
- mnemonics (aids to memory, such as rhymes)
- computer programmes
- websites and apps.

GOOD PREPARATION

Good preparation is one of the main elements affecting how people perform in examinations. This includes both mental attitude and physical preparation.

- Check how long the exam lasts and use your time properly.
- Make sure you understand your specification.
- Don't be tempted to rush the initial reading of the questions or the unseen poem. It is surprising how many exam candidates make basic mistakes because they did not read through the questions or text in front of them properly.

USING YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY IN THE EXAMINATIONS

Note that the time allocations are intended to include time to check instructions and read the paper carefully. Decide how much time you need to allocate to each question, dividing time sensibly, but remember that you need to include your planning and checking time. You may wish to plan your time for each paper ias suggested in the following table.

PAPER 1: POETRY AND MODERN PROSE (COMPULSORY IN BOTH ROUTES)

▼ READING THE QUESTION PAPER	▼ SECTION A: UNSEEN TEXT 25 MINUTES / 20 MARKS	▼ SECTION B: POETRY ANTHOLOGY 35 MINUTES / 30 MARKS	▼ SECTION C: MODERN PROSE 45 MINUTES / 40 MARKS	▼ FINAL CHECKING
5–10 minutes	Planning: 5 minutes Writing: 20 minutes	Planning: 5 minutes Writing: 35 minutes	Planning: 5–10 minutes Writing: 30–35 minutes	5–10 minutes
Duration of exam: 120 minutes (2 hours). Total marks: 90.				

PAPER 2: MODERN DRAMA AND LITERARY HERITAGE TEXTS (EXAM OPTION)

▼ READING THE QUESTION PAPER	▼ QUESTION 1 40 MINUTES / 30 MARKS	▼ QUESTION 2 40 MINUTES / 30 MARKS	▼ FINAL CHECKING
5–10 minutes	Planning: 5 minutes Writing: 35 minutes	Planning: 5 minutes Writing: 35 minutes	5–10 minutes
Duration of exam: 90 minutes (1 hour 30 minutes). Total marks: 60.			

NOTES ON KEY PHRASES IN THE ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

AO1 Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement

'Close knowledge and understanding' of the set texts are essential, especially as the examinations are largely 'closed text'. Students are not permitted to bring copies of the set texts into the examination with them. This is to ensure fairness as every student will have to use the same version of the text. Close knowledge and understanding may be demonstrated in the way the students range across the text in their answers, showing understanding of the whole as well as the significance of specific incidents or speeches. Students should support their points either by referring to particular moments in the text ('this is clearly shown when Juliet tells Romeo that…') or by using memorised quotations. Examiners look for well-chosen details from the texts, but these need not take the form of direct quotations. In Paper 1, all the poems from the Anthology will be provided as a poetry booklet in addition to the examination paper. Students may not take their copies of the Anthology into the examination.

AO2 Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects

'Language, form and structure' refers to the way in which a writer constructs a poem or piece of prose, through the selection of vocabulary and imagery, the use of particular genres (for example, the sonnet or short story) or of sound, rhyme or rhythm, and the organisation of the material, including narrative devices such as a third- or first-person narrator or use of dialogue.

AO3 Explore links and connections between texts

This is only required in one question, the second question on Paper 1, which is about the poems in the Anthology. Since this question carries 30 marks, and is therefore worth 20% of the entire International GCSE, it follows that half the marks will go to the comparisons that you are able to make between one poem and another. These comparisons or links can be related to theme, form, structure or language.

AO4 Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

'Understanding' implies that the student shows a grasp of the techniques. 'Contexts' may be examined through questions that ask about the society in which a text is set. The answer should always be rooted in the text and how the text reveals the social or cultural setting; it should not be a historical or sociological essay, divorced from the text. Moreover, you do not have to write a lot about the context: exam reports have always stressed that it is much better to make several fairly short comments that link to the context, than to 'add on' a paragraph or two about it at the beginning or the end.

RELATIONSHIP OF ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES TO UNITS

UNIT NUMBER	ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE			
	A01	A02	A03	A04
PAPER 1	13%	23%	10%*	13%
PAPER 2 / PAPER 3	17%	17%	0%	7%
TOTAL FOR INTERNATIONAL GCSE	30%	40%	10%	20%

* Required for the second question on Paper 1, the comparison question which focuses on the Anthology poems.

CHECK YOUR WORK

Check that you are keeping to your planned timings. Keep thinking throughout about:

- relevance
- presentation
- accuracy
- varied vocabulary.

If you manage to leave some checking time at the end:

- make sure you have answered all questions fully and appropriately
- correct any errors in spelling or punctuation (check especially that all sentences have full stops)
- be certain everything can be read clearly.

PLANNING YOUR ANSWERS

ANSWER THE QUESTION

Do **not** just write down everything you know: this is the most common mistake made by examination candidates. Planning consists of the following elements:

- reading the question carefully and deciding what the key words in it are.
- deciding the main points you wish to make, what the question is looking for and how you intend to tackle it
- making sure that what you want to include is appropriately positioned and structured in the answer
- giving your answer a structure: introduction, main section(s) and conclusion
- choosing examples or quotations.

THINKING ABOUT THE QUESTION

Identifying the key words in the question can help to show:

- *what* the question is looking for
- *how* you intend to tackle it.

Key words show what the examiner is expecting in setting this task. (There are sometimes bullet points to help you.) For example:

- 'How does the writer' is asking you to explain methods and techniques
- 'Explain' asks you to make clear to the examiner your understanding of the text and its methods
- 'Analyse' expects you to look in detail at the writing, its methods and techniques and its effects
- 'Compare and contrast' asks for an examination of similarities and differences in any relevant aspects (for example, themes, moods, forms and language).

KEY POINTS

Write down quickly, in note form, your immediate thoughts about the subject. You may find a diagram useful for this purpose. Do not write full sentences here, or you will waste too much time.

THE CONTENT OF THE ANSWER

The examiner **does** want to know what you think: your own, personal ideas and opinions. However, a series of unsupported statements that start with the words 'I think...' is not enough. The examiner also needs to know what these ideas are based on: the analysis of language and content, the understanding of the subject-matter and evidence from the text.

DECIDING THE STRUCTURE: INTRODUCTION, MAIN SECTION(S) AND CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION: A clear, brief introductory paragraph can make a very good initial impression, showing the examiner that you are thinking about the actual question.

MAIN SECTION(S): Decide how many paragraphs or sections you wish your answer to contain.

CONCLUSION: This may be quite a brief paragraph. It should sum up clearly and logically the argument that has gone before. Above all, it should show the examiner that you have **answered the question**!

WRITING ANALYTICALLY

When writing analytically, whether for English Language or Literature, many students find it helpful to follow the acronym:

P – Point

E – Evidence

E – Explanation.

This reminds them to structure their paragraphs, include quotations and then explain in some detail what it is about the quotations that validates their point. A slightly more advanced approach is to add '**L**', for **Link**, ensuring a tight structure, so, **P-E-E-L**.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS

When reading analyses of texts, examiners will always give more credit for some detailed explanations of how the writer is using language, in which the student shows clearly that they have understood how language is working, than for lists of mere 'technique-spotting'. In other words, you will get few marks for just saying that a writer uses short sentences and alliteration here and there; but if you can write a few lines on how a writer uses language effectively in just one sentence, that is how you will boost your marks.

USING QUOTATIONS

When writing about English passages, whether books, poems, articles or extracts, one of the most important techniques is to use quotations, where these are required and/or allowed. Quoting is a skill that has to be practised. Overuse of quotations is as significant a mistake as not using any at all. You should use quotations especially to:

- illustrate or give an example, for example, a simile or an instance of alliteration
- explain why you believe something, to support an opinion or argument or to prove a point.

Quotations should be relevant, effective and short: a single word to a line or two at the most. Introduce quotations fluently into your sentence structure. Avoid saying, 'He says…'. Look at the following example from an answer about Romeo and Juliet:

The fact that the play begins with the words 'two households' gives an immediate idea of what the subject of the play will be and prepares us for the introduction of the 'star-cross'd lovers' who come from these rival households.

REMEMBER – TIME WAITS FOR NO ONE!

Everybody has their own methods for planning and revision, but good exam technique involves:

- practising planning and writing answers to time
- dividing time sensibly
- finishing the exam in time, with time to check.

English departments vary in how much exam question practice against the clock for classes. However, it is invaluable practice for the real thing, which is always a race against time, so organise some for yourself.

LAST MINUTE REVISION

Think ahead. Revision the night or morning before an exam can be very useful, but generally only if you have done the groundwork solidly and can therefore spend time looking at checklists, summative notes, mnemonics and a few of your weak spots. It is not a good idea, to panic and revise until late at night because you suddenly realise that you are not well prepared.

ON THE DAY OF THE EXAM

Again, checklists and mnemonics can be useful to consult as you go into school, as might reading through a model answer or two. Always read the exam paper carefully **all the way through**, taking time to read, think and make some notes, before you begin the first question. This can have the effect of calming your nerves as well as allowing your mind to begin generating ideas for other questions even while you are answering the first one.

Good luck!

GLOSSARY

adjective a word that describes a noun or pronoun

adverb a word that describes a verb or an adjective

allegory a story, painting or similar in which the events and characters represent ideas or teach a moral lesson

alliteration the use of several words together that begin with the same sound or letter

anonymously when the author of a work or someone who does something (usually charitable) is not identified by their name

antithesis the complete opposite of something

assonance resemblance of sound, especially of the vowel sounds in words

atmosphere the feeling that an event or place gives you

autobiographical relating to a person's own life

autobiography a book that a person writes about their own life

ballad a short story in the form of a poem or song

bildungsroman a German word, meaning 'novel of education', that has been adopted into the English language; it refers to a story in which a character develops psychologically and morally, as they mature from childhood into adulthood

blank verse non-rhyming poetry

catalytic incident an event that is important for what it causes or the issues it raises, rather than being significant in itself

chronological organised in linear time

clause a group of words built around a finite verb

colloquial slang or informal language

colloquialism an expression or word used in informal conversation

colloquially informally

comedies the most light-hearted of Shakespeare's plays, these often include cases of mistaken identity and happy endings featuring weddings; unlike modern comedies, they are not defined by the inclusion of humour

comic interlude an amusing moment or scene within a tragedy

comic relief an element of humour that is introduced into an otherwise dark and serious work of literature

conjunction a word that joins parts of a sentence

connotations ideas linked to a word; ideas that have become associated with a word

contrast a literary device where two objects, people or ideas are placed next to each other to highlight their differences

dactyl a group of three beats, one stressed followed by two unstressed: *tum*-te-te (this rhythm is called dactylic)

denotation what something actually is

determiner a word that is used before a noun in order to show which thing you mean

dialogue conversation between two or more people

didactic language speech or writing that is intended to teach people a moral lesson

direct address using second person pronoun 'you' or 'your'

direct speech exactly what someone has said

dramatic irony a device, used in novels, plays, poetry and films, where the audience knows something about a situation that the character (or characters) involved does not

dramatic monologue where a single person (first-person narrator) tells the events, especially in a poem, either to a single listener or to the reader

drawingroom play a genre of play that developed during the Victorian era, in which all of the action of the play takes place in the drawing room or another communal room of a family home

emotive language language that produces an emotional reaction

end-stopped a line ending in a definite punctuation mark

enjambment the interruption of a sentence by the ending of a line, often producing a shocking and striking effect; for example, in 'Poem at Thirty-Nine': 'I wish he had not been / so tired / when I was / born'

ensemble cast in theatre, a technique where a group performance is used to create the world of the play, rather than focusing on individual performances; all cast members appear on stage at the same time, sometimes for the entire play; often, but not always, actors in an ensemble will play multiple roles

euphemism a more delicate or indirect way of saying something that might otherwise appear blunt or uncomfortable

fable a traditional short story that teaches a moral lesson

first person written from the perspective of one person – that is, using 'I'; this differs from the second person, which directly addresses the reader ('you'), and the third person ('he', 'she' and 'it')

flashback when the narrator of a story jumps out of the present in order to describe an event which happened in the past; often flashbacks are in the form of the memories of characters in the present

flawed hero a central character with a weakness that often results in their downfall

folk story a traditional and typical story of the ordinary people who live in a particular area

foreshadows shows or says that something will happen in the future

Greek Chorus in classical Greek theatre, a group of actors who comment (through speaking, song and/or dance) on the action of the play as a collective voice, rather than as individual characters

Greek tragedy a highly influential theatrical form from Ancient Greece; plays in this form were often based on myth

histories plays focusing on medieval English monarchs and power struggles during their reigns; while the characters are based on real people, the plays are works of fiction

homogenise make (or assume that) different things or people are all the same

hyperbole exaggerating for effect

iambic using a light, unstressed beat followed by a heavy, stressed one: tee-*tum* (this pair of beats is called an iamb)

idiom a popularly-used phrase, often localised, with a meaning that is not explicit from the individual words used

imperative a verb that gives an instruction or command

infer read between the lines

interjection a word used to express a strong feeling

ironic using words to convey a meaning that is completely opposite to their apparent meaning

irony using words to convey a meaning that is completely opposite to their apparent meaning

juxtaposed when two things are put close together in order to encourage comparison between them

juxtaposition putting two things close together in order to encourage comparison between them

magic realism a literary genre that combines realistic plot with supernatural elements

metaphor describing something by comparing it to an image which it resembles, in a way that says the object *is* the image

metre the rhythmical pattern of speaking used in verse

mnemonic a device used to aid memory – usually in the form of a saying or rhyme

motif a dominant thought or idea that reappears throughout a piece of literature

narrative the story or plot

narrator a character that tells the story in a novel, play, poem or film

non-linear does not follow a straight line in terms of chronology or setting

noun a word that represents a person, place, object or quality

novella short novel

omniscient knowing everything within the world of the novel or play, including the secrets of all the characters and what the future holds

onomatopoeia where a word sounds like the noise it makes

oxymoron a figure of speech in which the writer combines two ideas that are opposites; this frequently has a startling or unusual effect

parable a simple story told to teach a lesson, often a moral lesson

pentameter a line of poetry containing five pairs of beats or ten syllables

periodic sentence a sentence that is not complete until the final word or clause

personal pronoun a word used instead of a noun, such as 'I', 'you' or 'they'

personification when something which is not human is made to sound human by attributing human qualities to it

post-colonial literature literature written about countries and cultures which are, or had been, subject to colonisation, usually by European countries and Britain in particular; post-colonial writers often come from heavily colonised regions such as Africa, India or Ireland

preposition a word that is used before a noun or pronoun to show time, place or direction

prolepsis suggestions of things that will happen, before they do

prologue the introduction to a play, long poem or novel

pronoun a word that is used instead of a noun

protagonist the main character in a piece of literature

proverb a short sayings that contains a moral message or seeks to guide behaviour

pun an amusing use of a word or phrase that has two meanings, or of words that have the same sound but different meanings

quatrain a four-line stanza

quotation marks punctuation to denote a quotation

quotations words from a text

referend the thing or idea to which a word refers

repetition saying the same thing more than once to highlight its importance

rhetorical device using language in a special way to achieve an effect

rhetorical questions a question that you ask as a way of making a statement, without expecting an answer

romances also referred to as tragicomedies, these plays were written late in Shakespeare's life and career; key features include elements of tragedy, storylines concerning fathers and daughters, the redemption of a main character as part of a happy ending, and supernatural elements

rule of three literary device where three things are linked or something is repeated three times in order to emphasise them and ensure they are memorable

satire a form of writing that criticises the flaws of people, institutions or societies, often using humour, irony and exaggeration to do so

setting the place where something is or where something happens, and the general environment

sibilance a form of alliteration characterised by, or producing a hissing sound like that of *s* or *sh*

simile similar to a metaphor, a description that says that an object is *like* an image rather than that *it is* the image

slang informal language, often associated with a particular social group or class

sonnet a 14-line poem with a formal structure, consisting of a set pattern of lines; the Shakespearian sonnet contains three quatrains and a couplet (four and two lines respectively); the Petrarchan sonnet contains an octave and a sestet (eight and six lines respectively)

spondee a pair of beats, both equally stressed: *tum-tum* (this rhythm is called spondaic)

symbol in literature, people, objects or events that have a meaning other than their literal meaning

symbolic where a person, object or event is used by a writer to convey a meaning beyond than its literal meaning

sympathetic applied to a character in fiction, this means a character who is liked by the reader or other characters

synonym a word that shares the same literal or denotative meaning as another word; for example, 'quick' might be a synonym for 'fast'

tetrameter a line of poetry containing four pairs of beats or eight syllables

third person using the third person – that is, 'he', 'she' and 'it'; this differs from the first person ('I') and the second person, which directly addresses the reader ('you')

time-shift moving between different periods of time

topic sentence the first sentence of a paragraph, often used to explain the key idea

tragedies plays that feature a nobleman as the main character, whose flaws result in a reversal of fortune and their death, or the deaths of their loved ones

transactional part of a dialogue or a conversation, often used in texting

trochaic using a heavy, stressed beat followed by a light, unstressed one: *tum*-te (this pair of beats is called a trochee)

verb a word that describes actions

villain the main bad character in a film, play or story

witticisms clever amusing remarks

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